

THE FIVE CENT

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FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE ST., N. Y.
NEW YORK, August 30, 1895.

{ PRICE
5 CENTS. }

Vol. II.

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JACK HARKAWAY TRAPPED.



Six men pointed their weapons at him. To their intense horror, the friends recognized the form and features of Jack Harkaway. He was the man bound on the hurdle.

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JACK HARKAWAY TRAPPED.

CHAPTER I.

NOW JACK GOT ON.

HARKAWAY quitted his companions to go in search of the brigand chief. He mounted his horse, and went slowly along the road leading to Veauvins.

The volcano had for some time past been throwing up ashes and jets of fire.

An eruption was expected.

The day was fine and clear, as only a Neapolitan sky can be.

Jack had no very decided plan of action.

He did not want to attack the brigands if he saw them.

His hope was that either he or his friends would find out their haunts, and be able to capture them with an overwhelming force of soldiers.

He had been riding for a couple of miles or more without seeing any one but a few peasantry.

The rich vines, weighed down with their ruby fruit, were to be seen clinging to tree and hedgerow.

He turned out of the high road to admire the scenery, and went across the country.

The huge mountain served as a guide.

It stood out grandly against the blue sky, and seemed to beckon him on to his destination with invisible arms.

Suddenly a cheery voice exclaimed:

"Good morning, sir; or, as they say here, 'buon giorno, signor.'"

"Ah, my prince of tailors and king of bigamists!" replied Jack, who was in an exultant temper, "you have come in time to be of service to me."

"If Mr. Harkaway requires the services of a miserable Bigamini, he can command them, for miserable though I am, I do esteem it an honor to do anything for a gentleman and a countryman."

"Do you know this neighborhood?" asked Jack.

"Indifferently well, sir."

"I have heard that brigands have been seen about here."

"I've seen them, sir," answered Bigamini, lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper.

"You?"

"Yes; within the hour."

"Where were they?"

"Hiding among the vines on the Portici road, and if you take my tip, sir, you'll turn back for to-day."

The cunning spy knew very well that Jack was not likely to do anything of the sort.

Danger had a sort of fascination for him.

He had come out to find the brigands and he was not going to prove himself a coward at the first alarm and return.

In his belt were pistols, in his holster pistols, and he carried a clanking sword, as well as a rifle slung over his shoulder.

What had he to fear?

"No, my little friend," he said. "I will not go back; that is not my form."

"Well, sir, if anything should happen you'll admit afterwards that I warned you."

"Certainly."

"I'm sorry I can't come with you, sir," continued Bigamini.

"Why not?"

The little man hesitated.

"You'll laugh at me, Mr. Harkaway, and I can't bear being chaffed by the likes of you."

"Am I very different from anybody else?" inquired Jack, with a smile.

"Yes, sir; you are a 'ero."

"A what?"

"A regular 'ero. I'm only a poor tailor, and I can work at my trade and make good money anywhere, but the brigands have given me a turn, and I shall have to go elsewhere."

"How do you know that they were brigands?" asked Jack.

"I've been copped by them, and I couldn't mistake them."

"How were they dressed?"

"Like laborers, sir. They've got some game on, sir," answered Bigamini.

"Well, good-bye, my little man. If you won't come with me, I don't want to drag you into any danger," said Jack.

"I'll come as far as the stream with you, sir."

"What stream?"

"In the valley there is a stream, and I had some difficulty in finding the ford."

"The ford?"

"Yes, sir. It may be of use to you to know where it is."

"Thank you, sir. Trot along," replied Jack.

Bigamini started off, and Jack followed him over the uneven ground, little dreaming that in his path lay the greatest danger of his life.

In the course of half an hour Jack and Bigamini came to the banks of the stream.

The depth might have been three feet, but as there had not been much rain lately the current was not over and above strong.

"Go across there, sir," said Bigamini.

"All right; thank you once more."

"Good-bye, sir—I'm off. We may be shot at any moment."

Jack's lips curled with scorn.

Bigamini started off, running as hard as he could.

But he had not gone far before he sank down behind some vines and lay hid.

Jack was riding a mettlesome charger.

Being a good horseman, he always liked to be well mounted.

He was very particular about his cattle.

"Soho, there!" he exclaimed; "gently, lad. In you go."

The noble animal arched his neck proudly and plunged into the boiling, seething stream.

Scarcely had he gone half way across when he uttered a snort.

He stumbled.

Drawing up one leg, Jack saw that he had caught it on something.

It looked like a large rat-trap, the sort of thing we call a gin.

Plunging on, the horse put his other leg in a similar contrivance.

Then his hind leg caught a third.

The stream seemed to be full of these traps.

Jack, if he had seen some ill-looking ruffians among the bushes on the other side, would have known who put them there.

As he plunged about, Jack went over his head.

He fell against a rock that protruded above the water.

His forehead was badly cut.

He was unable to help himself, and was borne along by the current.

Infallibly he would have been drowned had not assistance been at hand.

But what sort of assistance?

A shrill whistle sounded from the quarter where Bigamini had concealed himself.

The little spy got up.

"I did that well," he muttered. "It wasn't a bad dodge to set rat-traps in the stream. They'll take him easy now."

Half a dozen men made their appearance.

They ran along the bank.

Half of them dashed into the stream.

Jack, half stunned, and nearly drowned, was dragged to shore.

A man with one arm was in command of this party.

"Is he dead?" he asked.

"No, signor," replied one of the men; "only a little hurt."

"Tear down a hurdle from that fence and place him on it."

The brigands who, by Barboni's orders, had been lying in wait for him, lost no time in obeying the lieutenant's orders.

A hurdle was torn down and Jack cast upon it.

His arms and legs were fastened to the bars by ropes.

show my devotion of Harkaway," replied the little coxswain.

"We all love him," said Harvey, into whose eye stole another tear as he thought of the probable fate of his friend.

"We do," replied the others in chorus.

"And he deserves it," said Mole, "for if ever there was a good-hearted friend in this world—though a little wayward at times—a little wayward!"

"Don't qualify your praise," said Harvey.

"I must say it, Harvey, for I have had trials in the past through that boy; but this I will aver and maintain, that a better fellow than Harkaway never breathed."

"We're all agreed on that point," said Carden; "and now we'll try and show him what we can do for him. If you'll all be ready in a couple of hours, I'll go and see after the camp furniture, stores, etc."

No one had any better suggestion to make, and Carden at once set about his project.

In a very short time he had purchased everything that was required, and about an hour before sunset a marriage conveyed the friends towards the Castle Inferno.

They crossed the Volturno as usual, and selecting a favorable spot, pitched their tent and made themselves as comfortable as they could under the circumstances.

The carriage returned to Naples, being taken back in the ferryboat over the river.

Hilda was very much grieved at this fresh campaign; but she knew it was Harvey's duty to go, and she was too good and noble a wife to offer any remonstrance in such a case.

Mr. Mole carried his cask with him, and declared, as usual, that it only contained fresh water.

If this was true, and there was a spring in the neighborhood, his continually putting his lips to the cask seemed rather superfluous.

The night was passed in that delightful climate without any inconvenience, sentries being posted every four hours to guard against a surprise.

Scarcely had day broken when the little coxswain, who was on guard, gave the alarm.

"Brigands in front!" he cried.

Everyone was on the alert in a moment.

Harvey and Carden stood a little in the background and reconnoitered.

Before them they saw a party of a dozen brigands, with Barboni at their head.

In their midst they carried something which the friends could not distinctly make out.

"Shall I fire?" asked the little coxswain, eagerly.

"The odds are three to one, and Mole doesn't count for much," said Harvey.

Very naturally he hesitated.

If he provoked a return fire, they might all be slaughtered.

"We are armed with breech-loaders," replied Carden.

"I can fire ten shots a minute."

"Chance it, if you like," said Harvey.

"Call Mole up."

Harvey looked around for Mr. Mole, who had retreated into the tent again at the sight of the brigands in force, and was pretending to sleep the sleep of the just.

"Never mind Mole," said Harvey. "It only increases the odds to four to one. That isn't much."

"Are you going to let these fellows walk over us?" said the little coxswain, impatiently.

"Not much," replied Harvey.

"Make ready," said Carden.

There was a pause, only broken by the clicking of the locks of the guns.

"Present!"

What were the brigands about?

Barboni stood within easy range of the rifles of the Englishmen, and his men seemed to be entirely occupied in contemplating what they held in their midst.

The next moment the word "Fire!" would be given, and blood would be shed.

Suddenly he waved his arm.

Carden hesitated to give the word, and it was well he did.

At his signal the brigands collected in the rear of their leader, and raised up a hurdle on which was bound the body of a man.

Six men pointed their weapons at him.

To their intense horror, the friends recognized the form and features of Jack Harkaway.

He was the man bound on the hurdle.

His arms were stretched in different directions, and his legs parted in the form of a triangle.

"Fire, gentlemen, if you like," said Barboni; "but you kill your friend."

A sardonic grin overspread his countenance.

Carden, Harvey and the little coxswain lowered their arms.

They shrank back aghast.

A faint voice came from the form bound on the hurdle.

"Fire! Fire! Kill that fiend and let me take my fate."

"Gentlemen," continued Barboni, "you are already covered by six rifles, and an equal number threaten your friend."

A groan burst from Jack.

"So, you see, if I fell, I should gain after all; for it is nearly certain you then would share my fate, and there would not be the shadow of a chance for Mr. Harkaway."

The reasoning was too self-evident to bear contradiction.

The word of command died away on Carden's lips, and the three friends grounded their rifles.

"I am very sorry, Harkaway, old man," said Carden, "that we can do nothing for you at present."

"Nor can you in the future," cried Barboni.

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Harkaway will always accompany us in this fashion, and when I am threatened by you or

the soldiers, I shall place him in front, so that the result of an attack will be his death."

"Monster!"

"As you please," said Barboni, shrugging his shoulders.

"You have the ingenuity of your master," replied Carden.

"Who is that? I own no master."

"Satan."

Barboni laughed demoniacally.

"Laugh away," said Carden, "your time will come, depend upon that."

"You talk like a child, Signor Carden," answered the brigand.

"Time will show."

"I am content to wait, more especially as I have the best of the situation. Take my advice and go home; you see you can do nothing."

Carden was silent.

Barboni spoke only too truly.

"Gentlemen, I have the honor to wish you a very good-day," continued Barboni.

"We shall meet again."

"Very possibly."

"And when we do?"

"Keep your threats for those whom they may frighten; as for me, I laugh them to scorn," interrupted Barboni.

He gave his peculiar whistle, which sounded shrill and clear on the sharp morning air.

Slowly the men began to retreat.

They walked backwards, always holding up Harkaway to cover them.

Gnashing his teeth with rage, Carden was obliged to let them go.

In a few minutes they had vanished as mysteriously as they had come, and were lost to sight behind some rocks.

The little coxswain was about to make a dash.

Carden pulled him back.

"Steady, young one," he said, "it's no use to lay down your life now."

"But they're walking off with Jack."

"Can't be helped."

"Blow those brigands! Are they always to have the best of us?" said Walter, in a tone of vexation.

"I hope not."

"One thing is jolly," said Harvey.

"What is that?"

"Jack's alive, and they don't mean to kill him just yet."

"We are completely licked at present," said Carden, "and there is nothing like owning it when one is."

"If we shouldn't have risked Jack's life, I'd have had a cut at them, if I'd died for it," said Walter.

"So would we all. But be sensible, little man," answered Carden.

"So I am."

"Well, what could we have done? What can we do now? The fact is, we must get back to Naples, and see if we can't ransom Jack."

At this juncture Mr. Mole emerged from the tent.

He had satisfied himself that there was no further danger, and he kept his courage up while Barboni was talking by repeatedly sipping at his cask.

"What's all this?" he said. "I've been fast asleep. Why the deuce didn't you call me if there was anything going on? You know I am always ready."

Harvey told him what had occurred.

"You don't mean to say that poor Harkaway was close to you?" said Mole.

"Yes."

"And you did nothing to save him? Come, I say, Carden, you call yourself a man of courage, and you didn't strike a blow for 'Auld Lang Syne!'"

"How could we do so?" asked Carden.

"What a curious thing it is that you boys are no use unless you have a man to guide you."

"It's no use talking."

"Yes, it is. Excuse me, but—there! hang it all! I can't control myself. You are a pack of cowards!" cried Mr. Mole.

"What would you have done?" asked Walter, smiling.

"Made a charge. Oh, you don't know me! I'd have had Jack away from them by hook or by crook."

"Would you?" said Walter.

"Certainly! For goodness sake, don't let me oversleep myself another time," answered Mr. Mole.

He pretended to be in a state of great excitement for some time, but no one took any further notice of him.

In an hour's time the friends struck their tent, and each carrying something, returned sadly to Naples.

Barboni the brigand had triumphed once more.

Their only consolation was that they knew Jack's fate, and that it is always safe to say:

"While there is life there is hope!"

But hope was nearly extinguished by despair and annoyance.

CHAPTER III.

A BLACK GHOST.

"EVERYBODY else fail, um try to do it, mum."

The speaker was Monday.

Hilda had been much concerned about the capture of Jack and Emily by Barboni.

She did not see her way clearly to getting them out of the confinement in which they were held.

But she fancied that something might be done by Monday's assistance.

Harvey, Carden, and the little coxswain, with Mr. Mole had returned defeated.

"Let us say nothing to anybody, Monday," said Hilda. "My idea is this. You shall go to Castel Inferno, where Mr. Carden thinks the brigand chief lives, and play the part of a black ghost."

"But Monday flesh and blood, mum."

"Yes, yes; I want you to pretend to be a black ghost, and dress in your wild manner."

"Just as I was in Limbi?"

"Exactly."

"Oh, that easily done, mum," said Monday.

"You will frighten the ignorant creatures who serve the cause of Barboni, and you will be very likely to bring back important information."

"Pr'aps lose um head, mum," said Monday.

"Even if you do, it is your duty to do what you can for your master," replied Hilda.

"Um lay down ten, twenty, thirty lives, if um had um, for Mast' Jack," said Monday.

"Very well," replied Hilda. "Say nothing to anyone, not even to your wife, and start to Castel Inferno."

"Yes, mum."

"Remember you're a ghost, and see if you cannot communicate in some way with Harkaway and Emily."

"Um bound to do it," said Monday, confidently.

The faithful fellow had been talking to Hilda for some time, and declared that he was willing to die for his master, if necessary.

The result of this conversation was that Monday should try and discover where Jack was.

He readily undertook the task.

Waiting until night came, he left a letter on the table of the pantry to inform his wife that he should be away for a few days on business.

Then he left for Naples and walked towards Castel Inferno, which he thought was the most likely spot for the brigands to be located.

He had heard the arguments of the young gentlemen, and believed, with Carden, that if Villanova was not Barboni, he at least was mixed up with him.

It was a magnificent night when he reached the Volturno.

Thousands of stars studded the heavens, while the moon reflected itself in the swiftly-running tide.

Without any hesitation, Monday threw off his hat and his clothes, which he hid behind a bush.

Round his waist he wore a cloth, just as he had done when Harkaway first saw him in his primeval forest.

His only weapon was a long, sharp, murderous-looking knife, which was secured in his waist band.

Monday felt himself wild again.

His eyes burned with a dangerous fire, he drew himself up to his full height, as if glorifying in his strength, and his nostrils dilated with pride.

Once more he was Matabella, King of Limbi.

Pausing a moment on the edge of the stream, he plunged in head first and swam across, though there was a very swift current to fight against.

He dived and sported like a duck, dashing the waters on all sides, floating on his side, swimming on his back, and performing other tricks which showed he was thoroughly at home in the liquid element.

It was strange to see how his wild nature asserted itself.

He had thrown off the garments of civilization.

With this act he seemed again to be a savage.

Reaching the other side, he shook off the water, and began his march to the castle.

Sometimes he ran with the fleetness of a deer.

At others he crouched and glided like a snake.

All the tricks and stratagems of savage warfare came into his mind.

He was, every inch of him, a warrior of Limbi.

The black was in splendid condition.

Fine, athletic fellow as he was, he appeared a match for half-a-dozen lazy, effeminate Neapolitan brigands.

When day broke, he was not far from the castle.

His movements were now very cautious.

Suddenly he dived down amongst some ferns.

A man was coming towards him.

It was a brigand.

He knew that by the slouched hat, the hangdog look, the uncouth manner, and the carbine, together with the dagger and pistols stuck in his belt.

Monday grasped his knife firmly.

No thought of pity or compassion crossed his mind.

He had gone on the war-path, and his ears were deaf to the whisperings of Christianity and humanity.

All his instinct told him in those dread hours was that his master was in the power of the brigands, and consequently brigands were his natural enemies.

To kill them was a virtue.

The man, whistling carelessly, came close to Monday.

In an instant the black sprang upon him like a tiger, uttering a subdued howl as he caught him by the throat.

The next moment Monday gave a heavy blow with his weapon.

The villain fell to the ground a corpse.

A smile of intense satisfaction flitted across Monday's face.

"One of the villains gone to um bad spirits," he muttered.

Spurning the dead body with his foot, he again crept along.

He had not gone far before he saw another brigand standing in a listless manner before the entrance to the cave.

The man had been on guard all night, and was asleep. In a short time he would be relieved.

But his companions were enjoying their rest in the interior, and the hour for relieving guard had not yet come.

Crawling on his belly, as he had done many a time and oft in his native land when he wanted to kill an unsuspecting enemy, he approached the sentry.

When he was close to him, he crawled over a stick which broke with a loud snap.

The sentry looked round.

Immediately Monday jumped to his feet in front of the brigand, who was so astonished that he stood rooted to the spot.

He thought he saw a ghost.

He could not move, and was perfectly helpless in the hands of his captors.

Helpless.

And without firing a shot.

The devilish ingenuity of the brigand chief had been only too successful.

Seeing that his work had been satisfactorily accomplished, Bigamini came forward.

"Ha—ha! Signor Hunston," he said, across the stream, "you've got a big bag this time—an almighty big bag!"

"Go back to Naples," replied Hunston, "and spread the report of his capture."

"Is there any hurry?"

"It's just as well that he should not see you when he opens his eyes."

"When he does, it will be to shut them again forever, soon, won't it?" returned Bigamini.

"If I was the only one concerned it would," replied Hunston, savagely.

"What does the chief mean to do?"

"How can I tell what the chief means to do?" answered Hunston.

"I thought——"

"Cut it quick, or, so help me Moses, I'll put a bullet in you, and let the daylight through your rascally carcass!"

Hunston held up his pistol as he spoke.

Bigamini knew him too well not to feel sure that he would keep his word.

"I know I'm a miserable Bigamini," he said, backing gradually out of range.

"Be off!"

"If I'd been a happy Smiffins, you wouldn't have dared to——"

Hunston cut short his words by deliberately firing at him.

If he had not taken the precaution to back while he was talking, his little game on this eccentric planet would have been over.

Taking to his heels, he ran back to Naples.

The sound of the shots seemed to arouse Jack.

He opened his eyes.

He looked around, and the first face that met his gaze was that of the lieutenant of the brigand band.

Closing his eyes again, he seemed as if to wish to shut out a bad dream.

Hunston smiled sardonically.

Touching him on the shoulder with the butt end of his pistol, he said:

"You're awake right enough. Look up!"

That face!

That voice!

There could be no further doubt about the matter.

"Hunston!" ejaculated Harkaway.

"Yes, I am Hunston. What is there to be surprised at in that?"

"Hunston!" murmured Jack again.

"Did you think you had done with me forever, eh? If you did, you were cursedly mistaken," said Hunston.

He laughed mockingly.

The horse, hampered as it was, struggled vainly to free himself.

With two legs broken, the splendid animal sank down in the stream to die.

He was quickly drowned.

"Get a horse out of the nearest stable," said Hunston.

"Si, signor."

"Shoot the first man who resists, and let us take our prisoner to the chief."

"Si, signor," again replied the man he spoke to.

Jack was recovering himself now.

The pain caused by the stunning blow on his forehead against the rocks passed away.

He was fully alive to the peril of his situation.

The heat of the sun was beginning to dry his wet and dripping clothes.

Sitting down on the grass, Hunston lighted his pipe.

"You didn't expect to find that I had taken service with your friends, the brigands, eh, Harkaway?" he said, tauntingly.

"I did not."

"I'm like a bad shilling, sure to turn up."

"What do you mean to do with me?" asked Jack.

"I'd kill you if I had my way; make a clean sweep of you—kill you right out."

"I suppose you can if you like."

"No, Barboni is a curious sort of a beggar, but I have some influence over him," answered Hunston.

This information put Jack comparatively at ease.

There was no immediate fear of death.

He was out of present danger.

"How do you find yourself, old stick?" asked Hunston, jovially.

As we know, he was not above insulting a fallen enemy.

He liked to triumph over Harkaway.

It just suited his mean and narrow mind.

Jack made no answer.

"Oh, you can sulk, if you like. Perhaps you'll be glad of some one to talk to presently."

He took a sip out of a brandy flask.

"I'll tell Emily you've arrived at the cave," he added.

"What of her?" asked Jack, aroused from his sullen stupor.

"Oh, that touches you, does it?"

"What of my wife?"

"Nothing much. We are getting on very well together."

"I trust she is free from insult!"

"I think she likes me better than she does Darrel."

"What Darrel?"

"Eh?"

"Do you mean Lord Darrel—Gus Darrel?"

"Oh, I've made you find your tongue at last, have I?" said Hunston.

"Is Darrel of ours with you?"

"He is."

"God defend me from my enemies," murmured Jack, solemnly.

"Here comes the nag," exclaimed Hunston.

"You won't find it very easy going on that hurdle; but I can't help that."

Jack closed his eyes again to keep out the burning sun.

He gave himself up to his reflections.

His thoughts were very bitter.

Soon the horse was harnessed to the hurdle, and the word being given by Hunston, the little party began to move by unfrequented routes to the cave.

It was a long journey.

Hunston walked in front, pistol in hand and pipe in mouth.

"Wake up that jade," he replied. "We mustn't lose time."

The horse was whipped up, and they went at a steady pace towards the Volturno. Jack was a prisoner once more.

Fortune's wheel had taken a turn.

He, as well as his wife, was in the power of Barboni.

And that power was backed up, if not shared, by Hunston and Gus Darrel.

CHAPTER II.

"FIRE, AND YOU KILL YOUR FRIEND."

THE three friends, accompanied by Mr. Mole, waited until the following day for the appearance of Jack.

When they saw nothing of him, they could not doubt that he had fallen a victim to the brigand chief, and was either dead or captured.

The Contessa di Malafedi called upon them, and protested that she was very sorry to hear of Mr. Harkaway's misfortune.

It was a great pity, she thought, that he had not long left Barboni to the care of the police and the soldiers.

From the first she had expected no good would come of his chivalrous attempt to capture such a fox as the chief of the brigands.

Carden declared that her protestations of sorrow were nothing but hypocrisy. He ordered a carriage and drove to the general's house.

Cialdini received him, as usual, with civility, and assured him that he had sent soldiers in every direction.

In addition to which the police were actively at work.

The three friends were profoundly affected at the news of Jack's capture.

Harvey especially.

At first they were inclined to believe it an idle rumor.

But as day after day slipped by, and no tidings came of the missing one they could no longer doubt that he was in reality a wretched prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

They were anxious to do all that lay in their power to rescue him.

But what could they do.

How were they to proceed?

Fighting Barboni was like battling with a shadow, ever shifting its position.

"Something must be done," said Harvey on the morning of the third day after that on which Jack had promised to return.

"Do you believe the rumors that are flying about?" asked Carden.

"I do."

"In fact, you are satisfied that Barboni has captured Jack?"

"Undoubtedly. I don't think he is dead"—here Harvey brushed away a tear without being ashamed of it—"or we should have had his head sent us. And I have made up my mind!"

"To what?" asked Carden.

"I will not sleep in a bed again until I find Harkaway."

"Bravo!" cried the little coxswain. "That's just how I feel."

"I'm with you through thick and thin," said Carden.

"As for me," said Mr. Mole, "I cordially agree with Harvey. None of us ought to sleep in beds, or, indeed, sleep at all, though exhausted nature must be recruited, until our dear friend Harkaway is recovered."

"Instead of jawing and humming and hawing," said Walter Campbell, "I think it would be more to our credit if we were to do something."

"Hear—hear," from Carden.

"I will accompany you anywhere, and expose myself to the danger of the brigands' guns," said Mole.

"Let us have a carriage and take a tent with us, and some provisions, and camp near where I fought with the brigand," said Carden.

"Not a bad idea," replied Harvey.

"You mean close to Castle Inferno?" said the little coxswain.

"Yes; a quarter of a mile or so from the Prince di Villanova's. You know my theory about the identity of the prince and the brigand?"

"We will go," replied Mole. "I had hoped to devote my time to teaching young Harkaway his letters, as I will not eat the bread of idleness anywhere."

"You're welcome, Mole," said Harvey.

"I know it; if I did not feel sure of it I would not stay an hour in this house. I am poor—miserably poor, for I have lost my all; but, gentlemen, I beg to assure you that Isaac Mole preserves his independence."

"Young Jack," said Harvey, "has his nurse always about him, and Hilda attends to him in the absence of his mother."

"What is that to the superior instruction which I should be able to impart to his infant mind?"

"It is good enough for the present," answered Harvey, "and I'm sure you'll be doing a greater kindness to Mr. and Mrs. Harkaway in getting them out of captivity than by wasting your valuable efforts in what you call imparting instruction to the infant mind."

"Do you respect my motives, Harvey?"

"Of course I do."

"And appreciate my principle?"

"Yes."

"Good; now I will buckle on the sword and figuratively don my armor, gird up my loins, and work vengeance upon those brigands," replied Mr. Mole.

"It is settled that we go out and camp, so as to be on the watch day and night?" asked Carden.

"I am agreeable," replied Harvey.

"No sacrifice I can make 'll be too great to

What could the black, naked thing in front of him be but an evil spirit?

The Neapolitans are the most weak-minded and superstitious people in Italy.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the brigand thought he saw a ghost.

Taking advantage of this surprise, Monday darted upon the fellow, and stabbed him fatally.

He fell with a groan.

"Oh, kafoozlum!" muttered Monday; "um found the cave. Mast' Carden give um ears for this."

He had done what none of his master's friends could do.

Not hesitating for a moment, Monday cautiously passed through the aperture in the sandstone.

This brought him into the large, vaultlike chamber outside the private cells and galleries.

About forty brigands were lying about in various places asleep.

Their number had been a good deal thinned lately by their continual conflicts with the troops.

Passing through these men, Monday entered a passage in front of him.

His purpose was to explore, and, if possible, find out where Jack and Emily were confined.

He had not gone far before he saw a light.

It was but the feeble glimmer of an oil lamp, placed in a niche in the wall.

Yet it assisted the keen vision of the black.

It enabled him to see a brigand, who evidently was posted as a sentry, but he had fallen into a reverie, and was looking at a miniature of a woman.

Perhaps it was the girl he loved.

The girl who was to have been his wife if he had continued an honest man.

One who would not allow herself to love a brigand.

Who can tell?

Perhaps a life's romance was wrapt up in the little painting.

The man raised the senseless miniature to his lips. He kissed the inanimate features with intense devotion.

A tear sprang to his eye, and he brushed it angrily away.

Was he thinking of the gulf that separated him from the fair and innocent reality?

Did his conscience reproach him for having fallen so low as to be a brigand, a murderer, and a thief?

He was not allowed much time to think.

Monday glided, snakelike, upon him, and that dreadful knife, sent him to his last long sleep, with only a groan and a gurgle.

Only long practice could have made the knife so deadly in Monday's hand.

There was never any necessity for him to strike twice.

Passing over the body of the guard, Monday took up the lamp and looked about him.

A door in the wall caught his eye.

It was merely draped by a piece of matting hung on a couple of nails.

Pushing this aside, he looked in.

On a mattress was a sleeping man.

One glance sufficed to show Monday that this was Harkaway.

A thick and heavy chain, fastened by a padlock to his right ankle, was attached to the wall by a large staple.

Creeping up to his master, Monday, whose heart was beating wildly, placed his hand upon his mouth to prevent him uttering a cry and giving the alarm.

Then he whispered in his ear:

"Mast' Jack."

Harkaway's slumber was disturbed by bad dreams.

"Let me die like a man," he murmured, restlessly.

"What! would you kill me in my sleep! Cowards!"

"Mast' Jack. Um must wake up," continued Monday.

The silence was profound, and the scene was a remarkable one for its weird and rugged grandeur.

Risking his life in his devotion to his young master, he knelt the black.

Harkaway, chained and captive that he was, yet looking noble and unsubdued, lying on a rude pallet, the sole furniture of the vault.

The little lamp's sickly rays, dimly illuminating the dimensions of the vault, which, in its roughness, seemed to have been hacked and hewed out of the solid rock by the hand of some giant of old time.

Suddenly Jack woke up.

He only saw the kneeling figure of Monday, and fancying he was still dreaming, he closed his eyes wearily.

"I dreamt of brigands just now," he exclaimed, "and my thoughts have gone back to my wanderings amongst the Malays. Ah, if I only had my faithful Monday here."

"Him come, sare."

"What!"

Jack sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Can it be you, Monday?" he exclaimed. "How did you get here? Have Carden and the other fellows stormed and taken the cave?"

"No, sare. They do no good, none of them, so Missy Hilda and I make up our minds I go and find um cave."

By this time Jack was thoroughly awake.

He saw how things stood in a moment.

"Thank you, Monday, old fellow," he said, "I thought my friends would not desert me."

"Never, sare."

"Are the brigands awake yet?"

"Not yet, sare."

"How did you pass the sentries?"

Monday, with a grim smile, pointed to his knife, which was covered with half-dried blood.

"Ha!" said Jack, "you have killed some?"

"Only few, sare. Two, three, four. Quite um trifle."

"Look here, Monday, old boy," said Jack, "I shall never forget your bravery."

"Say nothing 'bout that, sare."

"You've done a plucky thing."

"Um warrior of Limbi gain, sare," replied Monday, proudly, "and um like it."

Jack smiled faintly.

"You have found out the brigand's cave," said Jack, "and that is a most important step. Go back to Naples at once."

"You come too, sare."

"No."

"You not come, Mast' Jack," said Monday, in profound astonishment.

"It is impossible. See how I am chained."

"Get um chain off somehow."

"You can't. It would take hours, even if you had proper tools, and, brave as you are, you can't hope to fight a horde of brigands. No, you must go back at once."

"What do then, sare?" asked Monday.

"Bring Carden, Harvey, Campbell, and a lot of soldiers to surprise the cave in the night."

"Why not show um fight, sare?"

"Because they will expose me tied to a hurdle in the front of the battle, and I don't want to croak yet, if I can help it," answered Jack.

"All right, sare. Keep up um pluck," said Monday.

"I'll try. And now be off, Monday. God bless you, my true friend!" exclaimed Jack, warmly.

Monday raised Jack's hand to his lips, and kissed it affectionately.

"You understand?" said Jack.

"Got um lesson by heart, sare."

"Don't be rash. Remember that my life and my wife's depends upon your discretion."

"Monday safe as the bank, sare," replied the black, who glided as noiselessly as he had come out of the vault.

Daybreak was just penetrating to the outer cave, and the brigands were slowly rising to prepare for the duties and fatigues of the day.

With a feeling the reverse of pleasant Monday made this discovery; but he had provided against such an emergency.

Placing his hand in his girdle, he took out a little phial of phosphorescent oil.

With the utmost rapidity he rubbed this all over his naked body.

The effect in the darkness was remarkable.

He seemed to be on fire.

The fanciful flames leaped all over him, as if he had just come out of a flaming bath.

His only chance of safety was adopting a bold course.

With a bound, he sprang forward, and stood in the midst of the brigands, grinning horribly and waving his hands.

CHAPTER IV.

HILDA'S BRAVE CONDUCT.

WHEN the brigands beheld a strange, uncouth, black-demon sort of figure in their midst, they shrank back.

They were frightened.

Their superstitious fears beset them.

What was this strange being surrounded by flames and smoke?

Where did he come from, and what was his object in coming?

Dancing about in the most fantastic manner, Monday gradually drew near the mouth of the cave.

Then uttering a fearful cry, and saying something in his own language, he vanished.

Not a shot was fired.

The brigands crossed themselves, and thought they had seen the devil.

Laughing to himself, Monday retreated as far as he could, and was soon out of danger.

Reaching the Volturmo, he crossed the river as before, and finding his clothes where he had hidden them, he once more put on his civilized dress, and hastened back to Naples.

When he reached the city, he was so exhausted, that, after partaking of food and drink, he sank into a deep sleep, which lasted for several hours.

Hilda was apprised of his return, and gave orders that he should on no account be disturbed.

Harvey and the others were very curious to know where he had been.

"You shall hear for yourselves," said Hilda, "when he wakes up."

"Where did you send him, Mrs. Harvey?" asked Carden.

"To the brigand's cave, to seek his master."

"If he found it," answered Carden, "he is cleverer than we have been able to show ourselves."

In a few hours Monday awoke, refreshed in mind and body.

He at once went into the drawing-room, where he found the ladies and gentlemen assembled.

Dinner was over, and the cool evening air penetrated through the balconies at the open windows.

"Here he is," said Mr. Mole. "Shall I be spokesman? These black fellows, as I know from experience, are fond of exaggerating, and it will be as well if I subject him to a searching examination."

"As you like, sir," replied Harvey, "though I think we know Monday well enough by this time to feel that he will not deceive us."

"Take a chair my man," remarked Mr. Mole.

"Um rather stand, sare," said Monday.

"Very well. Now tell me where you have been."

"To the brigand's cave, sare."

"Did you see Harkaway?"

"Yes, sare; um see Mast' Jack right enough."

"Bless us! This is incredible," said Mr. Mole. "Let us hear your adventures from beginning to end."

Monday accordingly related all that had occurred.

"There!" cried Carden, triumphantly; "what did I tell you? Didn't I always say the brigands were nested up close to Villanova's castle?"

"Upon my word," exclaimed Harvey, "this is great news."

"Immense!" exclaimed the little coxswain. "We are no longer fighting with shadows."

"No, we can spot our enemies now," replied Carden.

"It's all up with Barboni, you bet," said the coxswain, with an air of determination.

"The thanks of this house," said Mr. Mole, "are due to our mutual friend, Monday."

Hilda rose, and taking Harvey's watch and chain from his waistcoat, presented them to the faithful black.

"Here is a present for you," she said.

"Quite right, my dear," exclaimed Harvey; "I'm glad you thought of it."

He never contradicted his wife. Everything she did was right in his eyes.

What did it matter that the watch and chain had cost eighty guineas?

Monday had deserved it.

The black's eyes were moist with emotion as he received this mark of affectionate esteem and regard.

"Me keep it for your sake, Missy Hilda—and yours too, Mast' Harvey, and thank you both for thinking of um poor black servant," he said.

"Don't run yourself down, old friend," said Harvey.

"You know you're a prince, and only serve Jack as a sort of favor."

"No, sare," replied Monday; "me serve Mast' Jack as um right, because he save um life. Me wait on the others as favor. That all um difference."

He put on the watch and chain, and examined the lockets attached to the latter, which contained photographs of Harvey and Hilda, and regarded his new acquisition with all the pride that barbaric races attach to gold and tinkets.

"We must lose no time in following Harkaway's orders," remarked Carden.

"One company of soldiers will be enough, I should think," said Harvey.

"Lots."

"I suppose, Mr. Monday," said the little coxswain, "that you can find the place again?"

"Monday never forgets anything," was the reply.

"You must let me accompany you this time," said Hilda.

"You!" cried Harvey, in amazement.

"Yes, my dear Dick," she continued; "I shall disguise myself as an Italian peasant woman. You know I can speak the language well."

"But where is the good?"

"If you are repulsed, as you may be I have my own idea."

"This is rash," said Harvey.

"Not more so than your own conduct."

"Of course we are bound to do all in our power for Harkaway."

"And am I to do nothing for Emily? Do not think that women are only good for sewing on buttons and nursing children? I believe that my sex are capable of higher things, and in this instance, I must have my way, please."

"Very well; you shall take a part in the drama, though I trust you will keep out of danger," said Harvey.

Hilda was satisfied with this assurance.

Lily Cockles was surprised at Hilda's cool courage, and declared that she could not have made up her mind to go near the brigands if anybody had offered her a thousand pounds.

Hilda was grand in her determination.

Ever fearless, generous, and enterprising, she came forward like the Jewish maiden of olden time.

That evening, Carden took Monday to General Cialdini's.

The magnificent discovery that the black had made was related to the commander-in-chief.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the gallant old general was half mad with joy.

He had received a notice from Florence, then the capital of Italy, that he would be superseded if the brigands were not put down.

The scandal was becoming too great.

"If this nest of vipers is stamped out," he said, patting Monday on the back, "I believe I can get you an order of merit from King Emmanuel himself."

"Um only want to get Mast' Jack out, sare," replied Monday, modestly.

That no time might be lost, it was arranged that the very next day a company of soldiers should go with the English "volunteers" to surprise the brigands in their cave during the night.

Everyone felt confident of success.

Mr. Mole declared that he should commit terrible slaughter amongst the Amalekites, and put ninety-nine and a half per cent. of them to the edge of the sword.

Certainly the prospect looked very encouraging.

Monday's discovery had altered the look of affairs altogether. There was no longer any mystery about the brigands.

They had a cave, and were to be found at a certain spot.

What was easier than to drop down upon and exterminate them as one would a brood of vipers?

This was the general opinion.

CHAPTER V.

"I'VE GOT MY BILLET—LET ME DIE."

In the morning Bigamini paid Monday a visit.

He saw that great preparations were being made, and was anxious to know the object of them.

"Going after the brigands?" asked Bigamini, carelessly.

"Yes," replied Monday, "um soon make short work of um briganda."

"How?"

"Me find out where um cave is," replied Monday, with an air of triumph.

"Indeed. How did you manage to do that?"

"That um secret which shan't tell you. Now we all go with soldiers and cut um up fine."

"Wish you luck," replied Bigamini.

"Seen um old woman since?"

"No," answered Bigamini: "I've dodged her pretty well, and I shall have to cut Naples if she makes it too hot for me."

"Take um glass of wine before you go?"

"Don't mind if I do."

Monday gave him something to drink, and he took his leave rather hurriedly.

Going to the stable, he hired a horse, as he was often in the habit of doing.

Mounting the animal, he rode at his best speed towards the brigands' cave.

It was an idle day with the rascals.

They were lounging about inside or outside the cave, and seemed rather grave and frightened.

Everyone was talking about the black ghost which had paid them a visit on the previous night, and killed three of their number.

Hunston was making a speech in Italian as Bigamini arrived.

"I tell you," he said, "that you are a parcel of fools. There are no such things as ghosts."

"Right, sir," said Bigamini. "I'll explain the ghost."

"Ah! Is it you, my prince of spies?" replied Hunston.

"Yes, sir. Can I speak with you privately?"

"Come into my private room. Is your news important?"

"Life and death, sir."

"Giacomo!" exclaimed Hunston.

A brigand saluted in military fashion.

"Telegraph for the chief—quick. Lose no time," said Hunston, who, turning to the spy, added:

"Refresh yourself, my little man, and when Barboni arrives, I will send for you."

Bigamini thanked Hunston, and was at once the center of attraction among the brigands.

He partook of refreshments, and laughed at them for their silly fears.

He declared that there was no such thing as a ghost and he expected some one had come as a spy among them.

Many shook their heads and refused to believe this. They had seen a fiery creature, surrounded by flames and smoke, which had danced about in their midst.

Some said it was an imp of Vesuvius.

All thought it foreboded some great misfortune.

Presently Bigamini was sent for.

Barboni asked him a variety of questions, and seemed very grave when he heard the news that they were to be attacked.

"It seems to me," said Hunston, "that the game's up."

"Not while I breathe," replied Barboni, with an air of determination.

"What are we to do?"

"You know that we have two mitrailleuses—one on each side of the entrance to the cave."

"Well?"

"These machines can fire one hundred shots a minute, and when the soldiers come up, we can annihilate them."

"We will try anyhow, though getting right away would be safer," said Hunston.

"That would not answer my purpose."

"We shall never be secure here any more, since we are somehow found out."

"True," replied Barboni, gloomily. "I know not how to act. This night attack must be repulsed, however."

"Things are getting desperate."

"We have Harkaway and his wife, though. Cospetto, this is very much in our favor."

"Why not kill Harkaway straight out?" asked Hunston, with a savage gleam of hatred in his basilisk eye.

"Because it answers our purpose so much better to keep him alive."

"I don't see it."

"Per Baccho! man, you must be blind. With Mr. Harkaway in our power, we can always make terms for ourselves."

"Well, yes," replied Hunston hesitatingly; "there is something in that."

"Go at once and make all the preparations for the defense. We will not be surprised in the night as they fondly hope."

"It was a narrow shave, though," said Hunston.

"Very. Bigamini has done his duty; I thank him. Come to the treasury to-morrow after the fight, my good fellow, and if either of us live you shall be handsomely rewarded," said Barboni.

"Thank your highness," replied Bigamini, humbly.

"But?"

"What?"

"I'm only a spy, signor, an 'umble spy, a very humble spy, signor, and fighting ain't in my line, exactly."

"You can look on, if you like. We can do without you," replied the brigand contemptuously.

"May I have the reward at once, signor?"

"Why?"

"You're very brave, your highness and so is Signor Hunston, and you might expose yourselves and get killed, and then I shouldn't have the reward."

"Get out, you low calculating humbug," cried Hunston; "you must take your chance with the rest."

Seizing Bigamini by the shoulders, he kicked him

out of the cell, and the little man tumbled on his hands and knees into the passage.

An aggrieved look was upon his face as he got up.

"This is not the first time I've been kicked and cuffed till my sit-on-it's got quite sore," he said to himself.

He heaved a deep sigh.

"I suppose it's my lot," he added in a tone of resignation. "I'm only a miserable Bigamini. My wife's dawn on me like a beaver, and I shall never, never be a happy Smiffins no more."

With this reflection on his lips, he retired to the great hall, where he applied himself with such success to a barrel of wine, that he quickly fell into a dozy state in a corner.

The presumption was that he forgot his cares. But at intervals he muttered:

"Oh! Sarah Ann. Oh, Sarah Ann, don't kick so 'ard, and I'll become a happy Smiffins once more, and never be a Bigamini again."

The remainder of the day was passed very moodily by the brigand.

The dark hour was upon him.

The news brought by Bigamini had dreadfully unnerved him.

Nor was this to be wondered at.

For sometime he had defied all the efforts of the English to discover his cave.

At length his hiding-place was found out, and in a few hours an attack in force would be made upon it.

He spent some time in close conversation with Hunston and Darrell.

The brigands were informed of their danger, and each looked to his arms.

Two strange-looking guns, called mitrailleuses, were loaded and supplied with a quantity of ammunition.

These were placed at the mouth of the cave.

They could fire a great quantity of bullets, and the strange machines were worked by a handle, which a brigand turned when it was required to fire them.

While walking along one of the galleries in the cave, the brigand chief was confronted by a strange lady.

To the members of the band she was *il Spirito*, or the spirit.

To Barboni, she was Lady Darrell.

Ever since the scene in the cave, when she had interfered to protect him, she had taken great care of the boy.

Fearful that he might again be ill-treated or murdered, she kept him as much by her side as she could.

"Ha!" she exclaimed as she saw the brigand; "care is on your brow."

"Let me pass," he answered sternly.

"Your hour is coming," continued Lady Darrell. "I can see that your star is waning."

"By heaven, you are wrong," answered Barboni.

"I have heard the news."

"What of that?"

"Your cave is discovered. To-night you will be attacked."

Those who dare attack Barboni will suffer for their rashness."

"Bad man," said Lady Darrell, solemnly, "you have offended Heaven too long."

"Heaven is too far off to take any notice of me," answered the brigand, with a harsh laugh.

"Scoffer!" she cried, "my wrongs will be avenged."

"Yours!" he answered. "What have you to complain of? *Per Dios!* you are lucky that I have allowed you to live."

"I have allowed myself," she answered.

"Why?"

"Because I love my poor weak-minded boy, who will some day be Lord Darrell, a peer of England."

"Never!"

"I tell you he will. I am living to see him restored to his rights, and then death will be welcome."

"You are mad," said Barboni.

The poor woman pressed her hand to her brow.

"Sometimes I think I am," she answered; "but I try to keep my head clear for my son's sake."

"Let me pass, you drivelling idiot," said Barboni, impatiently.

"Not till you hear all I have to say."

"Speak quickly, then."

"You are doomed."

"Ha, ha!"

Barboni laughed scornfully.

"Your sins have found you out, she continued. "I know all. The hand of Providence is in this."

"Bah! Are you talking to a child?" said the brigand, contemptuously.

"You murdered my husband," said Lady Darrell; "and I, poor, weak thing, lived while you carried me away to this country with my child, so that you might put your own son in his place and make him a rich lord."

"That is an old story."

"What of that? Is it less true?"

"Get out of my way, will you?" cried Barboni. The veins in his forehead swelled visibly.

This was a sign that his mood was becoming dangerous.

"Your son killed a man by a cowardly blow, and was obliged to leave England," continued Lady Darrell, "and—"

"Fool!" hissed Barboni, through his clenched teeth, "why do you irritate me with this twaddle?"

"Is it true or not?"

"I know it to be true; but what can you do?"

"I can revenge myself on you."

"Nonsense," said Barboni. "Only a confession from me would ever make your poor lunatic boy Lord Darrell."

"I will wring it from you."

"Stand aside, I say," he cried, losing all patience.

"People will recognize me," replied Lady Darrell, obstinately; "and when I tell my tale of wrong, my poor

boy will take the place that your wretched son has occupied so long."

"Fool!" said Barboni, "I am in no mood for this sort of talk."

He then pushed her away violently with his hand. Her eyes flashed dangerously.

Raising his fist, the brigand struck her between the eyes with all his might.

"Curse you!" he said. "Take that, you infernal wretch! You ought to have learned common sense after all these years."

She fell heavily against the hard rock, and her eyes closed in insensibility.

Barboni strode on, and was soon lost to sight in the many windings of the gallery.

Scarcely had the sullen echo of his footsteps died away, when a young man emerged from a sheltered corner.

It was Luni.

He raised Lady Darrell's blood-stained face, and the tears fell fast upon the pale features.

These were dimly lit up by a lamp, which stood a little distance off, and shed its sickly light around.

"Mother, dearest mother!" said Luni.

Lady Darrell made no answer.

"Speak to me, mother!" he cried.

"Alas, she is dead!" continued the unfortunate boy, as he gazed upon her pale face and motionless form.

With a deep sigh Lady Darrell opened her eyes. Her gaze fell upon Luni.

"Is it you, my sweet one?" she said.

"Yes, mother."

"Where is Dominico?"

"Who?"

"Ah! You do not know him by that name. That was how we called Barboni when he was your father's steward."

"He is gone, mother," said Luni. "I—I saw him hit you, but I—I was afraid to say anything."

"You were right, my child," said Lady Darrell, "leave it all to me."

"You told me to do so, when you let me know that you were my mother," replied Luni.

"Yes, my precious one."

She held his hand in hers, and pressed it tenderly.

"Will the bad man be punished?" asked Luni.

"Sooner than he thinks. Help me up, my child; let me lean on you."

She rose with difficulty.

"The brute!—to hit you with his fist," said Luni.

"It is not the first time," she replied, "but—"

"What, mother?"

"It shall be the last, my dear."

She spoke with the solemn impression of an internal conviction, amounting to a revelation.

"Shall we go from here soon, mother?" asked Luni.

"Soon, my child."

"Oh! I am so pleased," returned the weak-minded Luni.

"Soon," said Lady Darrell. "these caves will be as silent as a desert."

"No one here?"

"Not a soul. The owl and the bat will flutter their wings lazily in the blood-stained spot. But, hush, I hear footsteps. Give me your hand, Luni; my eyes are weak and swollen from that coward's blow."

The young man extended his hand, and they retreated through the long galleries.

Luni knew every turning, and they were speedily lost to sight.

Night came, the brigands were on the alert.

It was about three in the morning when the advanced guard gave the alarm.

Two shots were heard, and the brigands, who fired them hastily retreated to the cave.

Barboni was at the head of his men, calm, cool, and confident.

Nothing could shake the dauntless demeanor of this man.

Hunston and Darrell stood ready to fight to the death if necessary.

So did every member of the band.

These desperate fellows knew that capture was death.

Therefore, it was better to die fighting than to be taken prisoners.

"Hunston! to the right, Darrell to the left," said Barboni. "See the Gatlings worked under your own eyes."

The Gatlings were the mitrailleuses, those terrible machines that pour in a hail of shot by the mere turning of a handle.

Steadily advanced the enemy.

It had been decided that Carden should lead the Bersaglieri.

Monday was by his side.

Harvey, Mr. Mole, and the little coxswain brought up the rear.

Behind all was Hilda, disguised as an Italian peasant.

It was not considered advisable for more than one to lead the soldiers, in case of accident.

Lots had been drawn, as each was anxious to accept the dangerous duty.

The lot had fallen to Carden.

About a hundred and twenty soldiers entered the defile leading to the brigand's cave.

This did not include four officers, Carden and Monday.

Suddenly the black said:

"Hark! am he are. Look out, Mast' Carden; see the gatling's facts."

As the soldiers crouched on their hands and knees, he crawled out of the way of the soldiers, and got up against a rock.

It was lucky for him he did so.

"What for um fight?" he said to himself. "Plenty Italian mens to fight. Monday fight when wanted, now um have a quiet look on."

Suddenly half a dozen blue lights were thrown out in front of the soldiers.

They flared up on the ground.

Everything became as light as day. A lurid glare lit up the surrounding objects.

The soldiers hesitated, and would have retreated.

In the yawning gulf before them they saw fierce men and gleaming rifle barrels.

"Courage, soldati, courage!" cried Carden.

"Forward!" cried the officers.

Still the men hesitated.

"Follow me!" cried Carden, drawing his sword.

His example was irresistible.

The soldiers uttered a wild "Bravo!" and rushed into the jaws of death.

A harsh, grinding noise was heard.

The mitrailleuses were at work.

Fiercely, fatally fell the iron hail upon the doomed band.

They fell like corn before the sickle.

A deadly fire was poured in upon the wavering mass. Sword in hand, like a hero, Carden bit the dust.

Out of all the attacking party, scarcely a handful escaped.

These, scared and breathless, joined Harvey and the others.

The blue lights died out.

Grim blackness reigned everywhere once more.

Nothing was heard but the groans of the dying.

"This is awful," said Harvey.

"Confound it all," cried the little coxswain. "We are betrayed."

He was about to rush forward, but Harvey restrained him.

"It's no use," said Harvey; "we're licked this time; but no matter; they're like rats in a trap. We must have them sooner or later."

"Where's Carden?"

"Killed, I fear."

Suddenly Monday's form was seen in the imperfect light.

Day was just beginning to break.

In his arms he carried a blood-stained body.

"It is Carden," said Harvey, with one look at his pale face.

Slowly the little party retreated.

Not knowing what force might be yet outside, the brigands did not dare to come into the open.

Barboni would not risk his men's lives.

Thus far he could not follow up his success.

That the troops had been cut to pieces, and the attacking party received a severe check, was enough for him.

When the little party removed out of danger, they halted.

Two of the soldiers who had escaped, were dispatched immediately, to Naples for reinforcements.

The remainder, about a dozen in number, were prepared to defend themselves bravely.

Harvey bent over the body of Carden, which was stretched out on the grass.

"How are you, old fellow?" he exclaimed.

"I've got my billet, let me die," murmured Carden, in a faint voice.

A tear fell from Harvey's eye.

"Cheer up," he exclaimed; "it may not be as bad as you expect."

"I'm riddled with balls," replied Carden.

"Monday did what um could," said the black, "um see him fall and pick him up."

"You can't save my life," said the dying man.

The little coxswain supported his head.

Hilda and Harvey endeavored to stop the flow of blood.

But he was bleeding internally.

It was clear to an unprofessional eye that the days of the gallant captain of the Oxford eight were numbered.

"Ha—Harvey," he said in a faint voice.

"What is it, old boy?"

"D—don't mess me about. I've got my ticket. Thank you all ve—very much."

"You'll live a lot yet," said Walter.

"N—no. I'm booked. We m—must all d—die some day. W—will you do me a fa—favor?"

"Of course I will."

Carden spoke with difficulty, and his breathing was hard and stertorous.

"Telegraph to England."

"Yes."

"T—to my cousin."

"What's his name?"

"Lord St. Clair—Bertie St. Clair, we used to ca—call him."

"Yes."

"Tell him to co—come over here and just revenge my d—death."

"Certainly," replied Harvey.

"Ber—Ber—Bertie's in the Guards."

"Then a wire to the Guard's Club, Pall Mall, will find him."

"That's it. Oh, this pain. Sa—say I did my du—du—duty before I died," muttered the wounded man.

"You're a brick," replied Harvey.

"I wish I could die for you," exclaimed the little coxswain, sobbing like a child.

"Gi—give me your hands, you fellows," said Carden. He held each of their hands in his almost pulseless fingers.

"Good-bye. God bl—bless you all!" he murmured.

His voice was little above a whisper.

The end was rapidly approaching.

"Tell Jack I—I tried to get him out, wi—will you?" he cried.

"Harkaway shall know," answered Harvey.

"How dar—dark it is. I—can't see anyone."

Neither Harvey nor Campbell could trust themselves to speak.

The silence was only broken by the sobs.

"Oh, God! all mer—merciful," said Carden, "receive my sp—ir—it. I co—come, I co—me to Thee."

These were his last words.

So died as brave a Christian gentleman as ever breathed.

Done to death by the brigands.

Shot like a dog in a dreary ambush by the rascally thieves and cowards who held his friend Harkaway captive in their midst.

He had led a pure and spotless life.

Better that the whole bandit band should be exterminated than that he should perish.

But it was not to be.

The decrees of Providence are inscrutable.

Tom Carden was dead.

Barboni lived.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ESCAPE OF THE PRISONERS.

It was necessary to retreat.

At daybreak, the brigands might come out of the cave, and seeing the smallness of the force left to oppose them, make a furious onslaught.

The attack had failed.

Signally failed.

The Italians made a sort of rest of their guns, and between them carried the body of Carden.

Day broke, bright and glorious.

The sun shone on the piles of ghastly corpses which blocked the entrance to the cave.

Very melancholy was the retreat.

Their progress was necessarily slow.

Harvey and Campbell were bowed down with grief. Their friend Carden was dead.

Cut off in his prime.

Their leader, Jack Harkaway, and his amiable wife, who was beloved by all, were captives in the hands of the brigands.

They had not gone more than a couple of miles before footsteps were heard in their rear.

"Who goes there?" asked Harvey, in a loud voice.

"Friends," was the reply, in a feminine tone.

The soldiers halted, and presented their arms. Presently two women and a man were seen approaching.

One ran forward and threw herself into Hilda's arms.

"Emily," said Hilda.

"Yes, dear," replied Emily, "you see your friend again."

"Is it possible? How did you escape?" asked Hilda, in bewilderment.

"Ask this lady."

Emily pointed to a tall, thin form, badly dressed, but yet preserving a dignified appearance.

"I am Lady Darrel," said the second woman.

"Darrel!" repeated Harvey.

"I see you know the name. Barboni alias Dominico, was my poor husband's steward."

"Indeed?"

"He murdered him, and carried me and my son off here, and placed his own child in his position."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Harvey.

"For years my child and I have been kept in bondage. To-night we seized our opportunity and escaped."

"Where is Jack?" asked Hilda.

"We could not get him away," replied Emily. "He is too closely guarded."

"His turn will come," said Lady Darrel.

"I did not want to go without him," exclaimed Emily; "but this good lady assured me his life was in no danger at present, and I saw that I could do him no good by staying."

"Wonders will never cease."

"If you are Lady Darrel," said Harvey, "and this young man your son, who is Gus Darrel?"

"An impostor."

"I always thought so."

"He is the brigand's son."

"Answer me one more question."

"Name it."

"Are Barboni and the Prince Di Villanova one and the same person?"

"They are."

This reply made a great impression upon her hearers.

"Carden was right, poor fellow; we would not believe him," said Harvey.

"I wish he was alive to hear this," remarked the little coxswain.

"Barboni," said Lady Darrel, "murdered the young Prince Di Villanova and took his title and estates."

"There is no end to the fellow's villainy," observed Harvey.

"If you knew him as well as I do," answered her ladyship, "you would say he was a fiend in human shape."

It was great news to hear that Villanova and Barboni were the same person.

The mystery was cleared up at last.

"Barboni disguises himself by putting on a false beard," cried Lady Darrel.

"Ah!" said the coxswain, drawing a deep breath.

"He always wears a shirt of strong mail."

"That's why I didn't kill him when I fired," cried Walter.

"The brigand's are all getting tipsy over their success," said her ladyship, "and we took advantage of the confusion to get away."

"Will they stay in the cave?"

"Not when they discover our escape. Let us hasten away. I have no friends, no home, but you are English, and you will shelter me."

"My dear lady," replied Harvey, "you shall make our house your home."

"How can I thank you?" she said, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Have you not rendered us the greatest service you could, in releasing our dear friend, Mrs. Harkaway?"

"Poor thing," said Lady Darrel. "I know how she must suffer."

"Forward," replied Harvey. "We will talk as we go. We are not safe till we see Naples again."

Hilda and Emily were walking arm-in-arm. They had so much to say to one another.

Luni, looking quite a man now, supported the tottering steps of his mother.

Liberty seemed to have entirely changed him. He was no longer the mean-looking, slinking, weedy youth he had been.

There was an air of manliness about him, and he held himself proudly, as if conscious that he was free.

"Well," said the little coxswain, "things are looking up."

"Rather," replied Harvey.

"I thought all was over, and that we were dead beat."

"So did I, but you know the old saying"

"What?"

"It's a long lane that has no turning."

Suddenly Emily said:

"Where is Mr. Carden?"

Harvey pointed gloomily to the somber burden carried on their crossed guns by the soldiers.

"Is he ill?"

"He is dead."

"Oh," said Emily, "how grieved I am! This is dreadful! Poor, dear fellow! Jack was so fond of him."

"And he of Jack," answered Harvey, sorrowfully.

The march was resumed in silence, and everyone was occupied with his own thoughts.

At the ferry-house they found the ferryman, who knew them pretty well by this time.

He shook his head when he saw Carden, and said it was a bad business.

The body was placed in a room on the ground floor, and covered over with a cloak.

Emily and the ladies were very anxious to get home.

Harvey wanted to stop until the new arrival of soldiers came up.

This Hilda would not hear of.

"For the present," she said, "you must see us home. You can come back again, dear."

"Go along, Dick," exclaimed the coxswain. "I'll stop and see that the soldiers do their work properly."

"Very well," answered Harvey; "I'll take the ladies to Naples, and come back with a carriage for poor Carden's body."

"Don't forget to send Carden's telegram to Lord Bertie St. Clair."

"Not I. It was his dying request."

"Call on the general, and let him know all."

"Never fear."

"I should think," continued Walter, "that after this the Contessa Di Malafedi ought to be arrested."

"Rather."

"I never liked that woman," remarked Emily.

"Nor I," said Hilda.

"It is clear now that, all along, she was rowing in with Barboni."

"As the Prince Di Villanova, he was always at her house," replied Emily.

"He got the best part of his information from her," continued Harvey. "And I shall certainly ask for her arrest."

The ferryman embarked Hilda, Emily, Lady Darrel,

Luni, Harvey, and Mr. Mole.

Monday remained with the little coxswain, who overhauled the ferryman's larder to see what there was for breakfast.

He found nothing better than goat's milk, black bread and a garlic sausage.

This was better than nothing, and being sharp set, he and Monday took the edge off their appetites.

When the ferryman returned, he had in his boat a solitary passenger.

This was a young man, well dressed, with a sharp, quick eye, and an intelligent face.

He wore no side whiskers, but had a short beard and mustache, in the American fashion.

Springing out of the boat, he approached Walter.

"Say now," he exclaimed, "you're a Britisher?"

"I hope so," replied Walter.

"You've been brigand hunting?"

"Yes."

"I guess, from what I hear, it's turned out a bad egg."

"We can't always be successful," said Walter, in a tone of annoyance.

"I reckon that's true for you, but don't rile up. I'm told at Naples you've been kicking and running and raising Old Scratch generally for nigh on four months, and are as far off your particular brigand as you were at first."

"We've made some progress."

"Well," said the new-comer, "my name's Sam Alabaster. I'm reckoned smart where I come from, and they call me Clear-the-Track Sam in the States."

"Glad to make your acquaintance," said Walter.

"No, you ain't. Don't be too civil, or you'll bust. You don't know what to make of me, but if you'll let me be in this hunt I'll make matters as clear as a pipe stem."

"Thank you," replied Walter; "your countrymen are very brave."

"Don't keep on with the butter," exclaimed Clear-the-Track Sam; "it takes me right off the handle."

Walter bit his lip.

Suddenly the American exclaimed:

"What have you got there?"

He pointed to Monday.

"Why, it's a kinky-headed nigger. I can see that as easy as snuff; and it tackles me all into a heap to see a nigger so far from him," he added.

Walter explained that Monday was Harkaway's serv-

ant, and enlightened his new friend as to the position of affairs.

Clear-the-Track Sam handed him a flask. "That's old rye," he said, "and the best liquor you ever drank. If it don't make your hair curl and trousers turn up over your boots, guess you ain't no judge. Say now, don't you feel as good as new?"

The little coxswain thanked him as he gave back the flask, and pronounced the old rye whisky very excellent.

The American went on to tell him that he was traveling in Europe.

He had been twenty-four hours in Naples, and hearing that four Britishers were after the brigands, he had resolved to come and help them all he could.

Walter was glad of his assistance and of his company. There was a fund of cheerfulness and a merry way of talking about Clear-the-Track Sam that was agreeable.

Carden's death had made Walter Campbell feel very low spirited.

"Come, we're friends, I guess," exclaimed the American; "so you need not look so cross as a cross-cut saw. Take a drop more old rye."

"You forget that my friend Carden lies dead in there," answered Walter.

"That's true. Hullo! what's that? I'll swear I saw brigands in the bush."

Walter looked round, but could see nothing.

Monday had disappeared.

The few Italian soldiers who had escaped the massacre were all asleep, with the exception of the sentinel.

They were all tired out with long marches and fatigue.

"Keep quiet a little while and you'll hear music," continued Clear-the-Track Sam.

"What is it?"

"The brigands are sloshin' about somewhere."

Drawing a revolver, he crept carefully down a small hill to where a public road ran along through two vine-clad walls.

All at once shots were heard; fierce cries and oaths rose on the morning air.

Then all was still.

Walter dashed forward to take part in the affray. But he was too late.

He met Sam Alabaster coming back with a smoking revolver.

"Guess I made the fire fly," he cried.

"What's the game?" asked Walter.

"They're nimble," answered Sam. "There's a carriage upset in the road, and someone's been taken out."

"They've captured a traveler, then."

"That's so. I saw the varmints for a minute, and then they skedaddled quick."

"With the prisoner?"

"I calculate yes. They were gone in a twinkling through some hole," said Clear-the-Track Sam. "In fact, they're like Paddy's fleas—when you get where they are, they ain't there."

"I wish we could have saved the poor traveler, blow me tight if I don't," cried the little coxswain, in a tone of vexation.

"I did what was in me," answered Sam; "but you can't build a stone wall out of clam shells."

Walter went on to the road, and looking down he saw two horses lying dead, a carriage brought to a standstill, a coachman dead, and three brigands stretched in the dust.

"One of them's mine. I dropped him beautiful," remarked Clear-the-Track Sam; "and I was just going to spit on my hands and take a new hold, when they vamooseed wonderful."

As he spoke a party of brigands appeared on a grassy knoll to the right.

They were dragging some one between them. Possibly this was the traveler they had taken from the carriage.

Clear-the-Track Sam unslung his rifle from his belt.

"Bet you a new hat," said he, "I drop one of the pesky beggars."

"Done. They're too far off," replied Walter.

The American knelt down, took a steady aim, and fired.

The hindmost brigand fell.

"Guess you've lost," said he, in a tone of triumph.

"Bet you a hat you don't do it again," cried Walter. A second time Sam fired.

He was unsuccessful, as the brigands had hastened their movements, and were out of range.

"I've got the best of that, though," said he.

"How so?"

"I won a new hat from you, and as you bet me only a hat the second time, I'll give you an old one when we get back to Naples."

Walter laughed.

"Guess I'm some cute, eh?" asked Sam, with a wink.

They returned slowly to the ferry, and lighted their pipes.

If they had been stronger in numbers, they would have attempted to rescue the unhappy traveler.

As it was, they would only have been throwing their lives away.

"Ain't it hot just?" said Sam, mopping his face, "I'm as red as a beet. Guess I shouldn't care about cutting up Jim Crow capers in this sun."

An hour passed before Monday returned.

"Wal, old boss, what's your report?"

"Um been after um brigands, sare," replied Monday.

"What good have you done?"

"Um not able do much, sare."

"Of course you weren't," said Clear-the-Track Sam who had a great contempt for the black race.

"Monday's a cool hand, and a clever fellow," observed the little coxswain.

"Boah!" said Sam. "You can't make a white man

out of a nigger, any more that you can breed a lion from a polecat."

"Nobody wants to."

"It's against nature," continued Sam. "Can you get a peach out of a crab-apple?"

"No."

"Nor a pumpkin out of a watermelon?"

"Not much."

"Or eagles out of duck's eggs—orchickens from ant eggs—or goslin's from gooseberries? I tell you, niggers ain't of much account."

"Let's hear what Monday has to say for himself."

The black gave the American a savage look, as if he would like to try the sharpness of his knife upon him.

"Me follow um brigands, sare," he said, "and see them take um gentleman into um cave."

"Was he an Englishman?"

"Yes, sare; um know him well, and have good reason to remember um."

"Who is this English gentleman?" asked Campbell.

"It Oxford gentleman, sare—friend of Mast' Jack, but no friend of Monday, cos he once try to take away um wife."

"What is his name?"

"Sir Sydney Dawson, sare."

"By Jove! I've heard Harkaway talk of him. Didn't you try to rescue him?"

"Not me, sare," replied Monday, angrily, "me glad they take and kill him."

"That's wrong. You should not be so revengeful," said the little coxswain.

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Sam, triumphantly. "Ain't all niggers swine? Can you humanize them? No, sirree?"

"I wish the soldiers would come up; we'd make a dash on the cave," said Walter, anxiously.

"Soldiers are all very well; but don't talk to me of the black trash. You show me a decent nigger, and I'll make a whistle out of a pig's tail."

Monday gave the American another evil look, and went away.

It was getting on towards evening when Harvey arrived with a strong detachment of soldiers.

General Cialdini himself accompanied the troops.

Everybody was filled with indignation at the fresh outrage committed by the brigands.

A piece of cannon was brought up from Naples, and preparations for a most serious attack on the cave were visible on all sides.

Carden's body was sent back to Naples.

The troops then moved forward.

Monday again acted as guide, and this time the advance was made with great caution.

The little coxswain was in high glee.

"We will show the cowardly brutes what we can do," he said.

"It's like taking a nest of snakes," replied Clear-the-Track Sam, swinging his long arms and legs about as he climbed up the hills and over the furze.

General Cialdini declared that he would hang every brigand he caught to the first tree.

Walter did not altogether approve of this.

"I think they ought to be tried first," he said.

"That brings up a great moral question—as the nigger said when he was stealing chickens—and we haven't got time to discuss it now," replied Sam.

The cave was reached just as the moon rose, and its silvery rays made the advance less dangerous.

Drawing up the cannon, it was fired twice in the direction of the mitrailleuses.

These were knocked to pieces.

"Now, my lads," said the general, "charge and show the rascals what you can do!"

The soldiers uttered a hearty cheer, and rushed at the cave at the point of the bayonet.

To their astonishment, there was no one to oppose their progress.

They entered the cave, and swarmed all over it.

Not a soul did they see.

"Sold again!" said Walter.

"The varmints have sloped," said Sam.

General Cialdini was most profoundly vexed.

Barboni had evacuated the cave.

The brigands could not have been long gone, as their lamps were still burning and the embers of a fire smoldered in a corner.

All at once Harvey's attention was attracted by a groan.

He looked under a piece of matting, and started back in horror.

An Englishman was laying on his back on the floor. He had been stabbed in a dozen places.

A pool of blood had stained the rocky floor.

But what most excited Harvey's horror and indignation was the fact that the captive's hand had been cut off and forced into his mouth.

Instantly Harvey drew out the mutilated member.

"Are you dead? Speak, if you have any life left in you," he said.

An almost inaudible sound came from the lips of the man.

Bending down, Harvey put his ear to his blood-stained mouth.

"Name, Sir Sydney Dawson, Oxford; murdered by brigands, just gone."

This was what he heard.

"Take care," continued the sufferer. "Heard say slow match—blow up cave—kill soldiers."

Seizing the dying man in his arms, Harvey ran to the entrance.

"Take care!" he shouted in Italian. "The brigands have mined the cave. Beware of an explosion."

This warning sent them flying.

The soldiers rushed helter-skelter from the cave, and gained the open air.

Harvey sought a place of safety, and laid down Sir Sydney Dawson. He placed his hand on his heart.

There was no movement.

His soul had fled, but ere he died he had been able to save the others from a terrible catastrophe.

It was a melancholy sight to behold the elegant dandy of Oxford.

The refined and fastidious Sir Sydney Dawson.

Exquisite of High Street, and breaker of ladies' hearts in every capital in Europe.

He was carefully dressed, and there was a lavender glove on the remaining hand.

Alas, for human vanity!

Poor Sir Sydney!

His had been a short life and a merry one.

While these thoughts were running through the little coxswain's mind, a fearful noise was heard.

The brigands had set a time fuse.

Barboni himself had attached it to the magazine before he left.

His spies had warned him of the approach of the soldiers.

He hoped to blow them all up in the air.

A flash of lurid flame was followed by an awful roar and a tremendous upheaving of solid rock.

Never would the bandits' caves disclose the secrets of their former inmates.

The rock was torn and rent, and it fell back a mass of picturesque but shapeless ruins.

It was magnificent, almost sublime.

"Thank God for this escape," arose involuntarily from many a lip.

"That's what I call a tall blow-up," said Clear-the-Track Sam.

The general bivouacked his men until the morning, and each one camped as well as he could.

Next day an exploration of the ruins was made.

No trace of the brigands could be found.

The castle was visited.

Here there only reigned a dead silence.

Not even a servant was left in Castle Inferno.

Barboni had utterly and completely cleared out.

Where he had gone was a matter of conjecture.

Seeing that the game was up, it was supposed he had retreated to the mountains.

His disguise as Prince di Villanova was known.

There was no safety for him and his men except in flight.

Whether he had killed Harkaway or taken him with him it was impossible for him to say.

Foiled again, the whole party of pursuers had to return to Naples.

Monday alone remained.

He expressed his determination of hunting about until he had found his master.

The faithful black would not give up the chase.

In Naples the opinion was that Barboni had received a severe check.

The Contessa Di Malafedi was thrown into prison to await her trial as an accomplice of the brigands.

Lady Darrel and Luni were received and cared for by Emily and Hilda.

Clear-the-Track Sam was a constant visitor at Harvey's.

The Englishmen were only waiting an opportunity of recommencing operations.

Until they received some news of Barboni's whereabouts, however, they could do nothing.

Troops took possession of Castel Inferno, and made it a strong garrison.

Exploring parties went out every day.

But weeks glided by, and no news came of Barboni.

Emily hugged her grief to her sorrowing heart, and prayed to Heaven for Jack to be restored to her.

It was a sore trial.

But she bore it bravely, like the courageous girl she was.

Harvey fretted and fumed.

The little coxswain used bad language, and cleaned his pistols.

Mr. Mole declared that if he could only see Barboni, he would eat him.

"If you did," replied Sam Alabaster, "I guess he'd disagree with you, and you'd look kinder blue about the gills, and something like own brother to a frozen turnip."

"My young and impulsive friend," answered Mr. Mole, with a smile of mild reproof, "you don't know me."

"Yes, I do," said Sam; "you're one of those confounded Britishers, who think they can do anything."

This roused Mr. Mole's ire.

"Why, you thin, ill-made whipper-snapper," he answered, "if I thought you meant what you said, I'd wipe out this insult."

"Don't get calling names. If I'm thin, what are you?"

"Look at the troubles I've gone through," said Mole, pathetically.

"What's that to do with your looks? You can't afford to die. You're one of those walking, poverty-stricken skeletons who go about to save the expenses of a funeral."

Mr. Mole turned haughtily on his heel, and went away.

He was no match for the American.

Tom Carden and Sir Sydney Dawson were buried on the same day in a Protestant cemetery.

All the English in Naples and several Italians followed these two victims of the brigands.

Then the thoughts of our little party turned to Monday.

When would he return?

What news would he bring with him?

"If he doesn't come back soon," said Walter, "I shall start after him."

"And I too," replied Harvey. "I can't stand being here idle."

Still the days passed by and no news came.

Suspense seemed more unendurable than the exciting events that had lately taken place.

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH OF THE WITCH.

WHEN Monday resolved to stop and spy about in search of his beloved master, he was rather puzzled where to go.

He wandered out in his wild state. His clothes were again discarded and hidden. Once more he was a savage. On the evening of the day the troops returned to Naples, he was looking about the ferry. It was his opinion that the ferryman was in the pay of Barboni.

The Prince of Villanova, if he was the chief, had always crossed over in the ferryboat. So it was not a bad idea of the black's to hang about in that neighborhood.

Nor did he go unrewarded for his pains. He saw a little man come up and talk with Andrea, which was the ferryman's name.

"Is all safe?" asked Andrea. "Safe as we can make it," was the reply. "Ha!" said Monday, "that um Bigamy chap."

He was right. The speaker was Bigamini, the prince of spies. "Where goest thou?" asked Andrea. "I shall be heard of at the sybil's cave for some time to come. That's my headquarters. Come, ferry me over."

Bigamini jumped into the boat and Monday heard no more.

He could not make much out of the conversation. But he determined to watch Bigamini. It was better than doing nothing. Swimming leisurely across the river, he walked towards the cave.

Bigamini arrived some time before him. The witch was sitting before a fire, over which, on a tripod, hung a saucepan, in which some mess of food was cooking.

The snakes were gliding about as usual. The wolf sat on its haunches, and sniffed at the savory stew, of which he expected to get his share.

Looking up as Bigamini entered, the old woman uttered a grunt of recognition.

"Good-evening, mother," said Bigamini.

"Get thee gone!" replied the witch, angrily.

"What for?"

"The stars warn me of evil through thee."

"Perhaps the stars tell lies, perhaps they don't," answered Bigamini.

"Who sent you here?"

"The master."

"For what purpose?" queried the sybil.

"I've got to keep watch here. Things have gone badly with us."

"Ha! is it so? I warned him to be careful. When Mars is in conjunction with Mercury, and Sirius hides his face, there is danger in the air."

She rocked herself to and fro for some time.

Suddenly she raised her head, and her sharp, ferret eyes sought his face.

"What has happened?" she demanded.

"The cave is discovered, the prisoners have escaped, and everyone knows that Villanova and Barboni are one and the same person."

"That is bad—very bad."

"We have blown up the cave, deserted the castle, and taken to the mountains."

"Bad—bad," murmured the witch, shaking her head, gravely.

"You cursed old croaker," said Bigamini, "are you going to keep me here without offering me anything to eat and drink?"

"I have nothing."

"What's in the pot?" he said, lifting the lid, and adding with an appreciative sniff—"stewed kid, I'll swear; that's good enough for me."

"You're no welcome guest here," said the witch.

"The master sent me here, so make me bones over it. I'm a fixture. Get some brandy, and then I'll have a dish of that goat stew."

With a groan of discontent, the sybil obeyed him.

She went to a locker in the rock, and drew out a bottle.

Bigamini fancied that he saw, by the glare of the lamp, aided by the flickering of the fire, a quantity of gold coins.

"Got money, has she?" he murmured, while an evil look took possession of his face.

His hand involuntarily sought his belt as if he wished to assure himself that his knife was there.

"Tell me the news again," said the witch, as she gave him the spirit, which he drank raw.

"You deaf old beetle," replied Bigamini, "can't you hear?"

"Not so well as I used."

"The woman they call Il Spirito, and the young man Luni, have escaped."

"Yes."

"The cave's blown up, and the castle deserted."

"Well?"

"Barboni has gone to the hills with his men."

"Bad, bad—all bad," sighed the old woman.

"You seem to take a great deal of interest in the chief," said Bigamini, curiously.

"I have good reason."

"Why?"

"Because I am his mother," was the reply.

"Well, may I be a happy Smiffins!" said Bigamini, drawing a long breath.

"Yes, he is my son, and I love him dearly, though, *santissima Vergine!* he has never treated me too well."

"Why should he, you creaking old hag?" asked Bigamini.

He helped himself to some more brandy.

"I did not make him what he is," said the witch.

"He's a brigand—I'm a brigand—we're all brigands,

and where are they who wouldn't be, that's what I want to know!" cried Bigamini.

"Ah, it's a bad life. You're all common thieves, though I once thought I should never have to call my son that," replied the old woman.

"You must be a duffer if you abuse your own flesh and blood!" exclaimed Bigamini.

"I speak the truth. He was well brought up. We had a good position once at Verona."

"Pity you didn't keep it."

"Domimco broke his father's heart, and, robbing me, reduced me to beggary."

"But he's given you a lot since, I dare say," said Bigamini, with an eager glance.

"Yes—I can't complain."

"What did he give you—gold?"

"Yes."

"And precious stones?"

"Yes."

"Have you got them now?"

The little man's eyes glittered dangerously as he asked the question.

"That's no business of yours," replied the witch. She lifted the lid of the pot and stirred up the mess with a wooden spoon.

"Come along, mother," said Bigamini in his best Italian, "give us some of that grub."

"Don't interrupt me," answered the witch, extending her skinny hands over the caldron.

"I'm hungry."

"None of this will you have."

"Why?"

"I'm working my spells."

"Bother your spells, you old fool," said Bigamini.

The sybil arose, and seizing one of the snakes by the neck, threw it into the pot.

"By this sign, and by this token,

Never shall my spell be broken."

she sang in a wierd voice.

"I say, don't," exclaimed Bigamini; "I can't stomach snakes."

"Silence!"

"I won't be silent. Is that what you usually make your stews of? If so, I won't dine with you often if I can help it."

"Let owlets flutter and bats fly,

My Barboni shall not die."

continued the witch.

The wolf bared his gums and opened his jaws as if he saw mischief was brewing and was ready to take his own part.

"What's up, mother?" said Bigamini.

She made no answer.

"Have you gone off your chump?" he added, in English.

She threw another snake into the caldron, and the wretched thing writhed and twisted.

Its head protruded over the edge, but she beat it back with a spoon.

Again the witch sang:

"He may suffer much and long,

May be weak instead of strong;

But by the stars that light the sky,

My Barboni shall not die."

"That's more than you know," said Bigamini.

"Hush!" she answered; "it is the voice of fate."

"Voice of humbug. Give us some grub. Get out and let me come."

He pushed the old woman rudely aside, and peered into the seething caldron.

The snakes were dead now, and looked like eels in a stew.

"What a jolly old fool to go and spoil a good supper," said Bigamini, in a tone of disgust.

"Stand aside," cried the witch.

"I shan't."

"You'll break the spell."

"Blow the spells."

She seized him by the arm to drag him back.

"Look here, old girl; you ain't Sarah Ann, and I shall have to give you a topper, if you come it too strong," said Bigamini.

His attitude was threatening.

He thought of the gold he had seen in the cupboard in the rock.

It might be his.

What did it matter that the blear-eyed old crone was the mother of Barboni?

No one would see him commit the deed.

He could swear that the troops had killed her on their way back to Naples.

She was suspected of harboring brigands.

What more likely than that the Italians should put her to death, thinking her an accomplice of Barboni?

Unable to resist the temptation, Bigamini drew his knife and as she again attempted to push him back, he struck her.

"Oh! Holy Virgin!" she cried and sunk to the ground.

Bigamini threw himself upon her, and buried his knife deep into her heart.

Once, twice, thrice, he repeated the death-dealing stroke.

The witch uttered some incoherent sounds.

Rising to his feet, Bigamini gazed steadily at the corpse.

The wolf came up and licked his mistress's blood.

"She's dead," said Bigamini, with a ghastly smile.

"Now for the treasure."

He went to the cupboard in the rock.

To his delight he beheld a goodly pile of gold coin, mingled with jewels.

"This will make me rich," he muttered. "Let it stay here for the present; and now to dispose of the body."

He did not see a pair of keen eyes looking at him through the entrance to the cave.

Monday was peering through the imperfect light, which, however, was sufficient to enable the black to see what had taken place.

And what was it he saw? Murder.

He did not see a pair of keen eyes looking at him through the entrance to the cave.

Monday was peering through the imperfect light, which, however, was sufficient to enable the black to see what had taken place.

And what was it he saw? Murder.

He did not see a pair of keen eyes looking at him through the entrance to the cave.

Monday was peering through the imperfect light, which, however, was sufficient to enable the black to see what had taken place.

And what was it he saw? Murder.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE BEDFELLOW.

WHEN Bigamini was satisfied that the witch was dead, he dragged the body for some distance into the interior of the cave.

Pitching her down a hole, he bestowed a curse upon her by way of funeral sermon.

Then he returned to the caldron.

The Sybil had spoilt the mess by throwing in the snakes.

He couldn't eat snakes, so he took up the pot and emptied its contents outside the cave.

Monday retired when he saw him coming.

Washing the pot out at the spring, Bigamini put some fresh water in and some more onions.

"I'll go and see if I can't steal a fowl or two," he said aloud, "at some farm-house. Blessed if I ain't hungry enough to eat a horse."

Stirring up the fire and putting on some more logs, he walked off.

Scarcely had he gone before Monday walked in.

"What um Bigamini doing here?" he asked himself. The wolf bared his gums at the black, but the latter, not being afraid of him, caught him by the neck.

Holding him in his arms he took him outside. Here was the savory stew that the snakes had spoilt. The wolf appreciated this, and fell to with an appetite.

Speedily goat's meat, and even snakes, disappeared down his capacious swallow.

When he had finished his supper, he came up, and rubbed his head against Monday.

He seemed to say:

"You're not a bad sort, and I'm much obliged to you for this good feed."

"Poor wolf, nice wolf," said Monday, patting him. Monday had seen the dead body of the witch, and witnessed the carrying away of it by Bigamini.

He guessed that a murder had taken place, though what Bigamini's object could be he was unable to conjecture.

Presently he would come back with the fowls. An accomplished thief and ruffian like Bigamini would not have much difficulty in finding a hen-roost.

And when he found it, his scruples of conscience would not prevent him from wringing the necks of some roosters.

He would come home and put them in the pot. This would make a splendid supper.

Monday was hungry, and he determined to cut Bigamini out if he could.

The witch had been accustomed to sleep in a little bed placed in a hole cut out of the rock.

Sheets she disdained as luxuries.

But she had blankets and a counterpane.

Monday fancied that Bigamini would sleep in her bed.

Picking up a piece of rope, he called the wolf to him.

"Poor wolf, come to um Monday; um good wolf," he said.

The animal, being accustomed to human society, and grateful for the stew, came.

Animals are something like men.

The surest road to their hearts is through their stomachs.

Seizing the wolf by the neck again, the black tied his forelegs together.

Then he did the same with his hind ones. The wolf resented this treatment, and bit his finger.

"Bite um Monday, you beast," he said; "I cut um liver out."

The wolf seemed to understand the threat, and having some respect for his liver, lay quiet on his back.

Monday sucked his finger till the pain went away. Then he lighted a lamp, and took stock of the cave.

There were several cupboards in the rock. One was a larder.

Another a gold cupboard; and in a third were some articles that women wear.

Monday seized upon a dress and a cap, which he wore off in triumph.

The dress was of a light-colored material, and in it he put the wolf.

On his head he fastened the cap.

Taking the unresisting animal in his arms, he carried him to the bed, and placed him in it. The wolf lay quite still.

Monday pulled the clothes over him, and hid himself up in a dark part of the cave.

Soon Bigamini returned with four fat fowls. These he plucked, cleaned, and cast into the pot.

Having done this, he rubbed his hands with glee at the idea of the nice supper he would have.

Being rather tired, he thought he would have a little rest.

Looking round, he saw the witch's bed. Taking up the lamp, he approached it.

"I shall have a pipe until the grub's ready," he said; "and I may as well rest, for I've been on the tramp all day."

Setting down the lamp on a ledge of rock, which was meant to receive it, he approached the bed.

There was a curious noise as he came near. The wolf had seen him kill his mistress, and he did not like Bigamini.

"What on earth's that?" asked Bigamini. He began to tremble.

Dismissing his fears, he advanced again and pulled down the clothes.

With a cry of horror he let them fall.

The witch had come to life again, or it was her ghost in the bed.

Filled with superstitious fears, he retreated outside the cave.

The wolf uttered snarl after snarl, and Bigamini made sure it was a spirit.

"I'll not come in again to-night," he said; "I'll sleep in the open. No ghosts for me. I was a fool to touch the old hag. I might have known she'd raise spirits."

So he went outside and sat on a stone smoking his pipe, and casting frightened looks at the mouth of the cave.

Meanwhile the stewing fowls went on capitally.

The smell was most appetizing.

Monday licked his lips.

He had had nothing to eat all day, and he thought he could polish off some of that poultry.

Thinking that the ghost had settled Bigamini, he stole from his place of concealment.

In a cupboard he found a wooden platter, and a knife and fork, as well as some salt.

He took off the top of the pot, and plunged the fork into a fowl.

It was done.

Pulling it out, he placed it on the platter and began to eat it.

In a surprising short time it was gone.

Monday had enough of the savage left in him to do without bread.

He went the fork a second time, and out came fowl number two.

This went the way of the first.

His appetite not having yet lost its edge, he began to tackle a third.

Bigamini, meanwhile, was sitting outside the door, and he could smell the savory steam of onions and stewed fowls.

"It's uncommon good," he said. "I'll go in and chance the ghost."

Entering the cave, he started back in amazement.

There was somebody eating his supper.

Again he cautiously advanced.

It could not be a ghost, because ghosts don't eat.

"I say, you fellow there, what are you doing?" he cried.

It was Monday's turn to start now.

"Um Bigamini," he muttered; "make haste now." He had just finished the third fowl, and he dipped into the pot for the fourth start.

Bigamini sprang forward.

"No, I'm darned if you do," he said; "you've had enough."

Monday jumped up, holding the fowl on the fork in one hand, and his knife in the other.

"Um want to be stuck like um stuck um witch?" asked Monday, his eyes gleaming.

Bigamini fell back alarmed.

"Is it you, Mr. Monday?" he said. "What have you done with your togs?"

"I'm on the warpath," replied Monday. "Keep off."

"How did you come here?"

"Come for shelter; find um good supper and eat sum," answered Monday, with a grin.

Bigamini groaned.

"Give us a bit," he said. "I stole the fowls and cooked 'em."

"Um welcome to um soup; find some black bread in um cupboard, dare say," said Monday.

"Well, you are a hog," said Bigamini.

"What four fowls to hungry man?"

"What? Have you eaten the lot, and I sitting outside?"

"Um all gone," replied Monday, cracking the last leg between his powerful teeth.

"Well, I'm blowed; I didn't think it was in you, Mr. Monday."

"It's all in me now," said Monday, grinning again.

Bigamini gulped down his annoyance.

"I'll put up with the soup," he said. "I'm only a miserable Bigamini, and I suppose soup's good enough for me."

"It's too good."

"Ah, you wouldn't have said so when I was a happy Smiffins; but no matter, a time will come when the weary shall be at rest. But I say, sir—Mr. Monday, sir."

"What um say?"

"Have you seen anything since you've been here?" asked Bigamini, bending forward anxiously and nervously.

"Yes."

"What?"

"Um see um ghost in um bed. You killed um witch. I see that, and now up witch come to haunt um cave."

"You saw me. You won't split on me, will you?—not that she was worth anything, but I shouldn't like it to come out."

"Treat me well, Mist' Bigamini, and me say nothing, so try to stab um. Monday carry um knife. See."

The black produced his weapon, and flashed it in Bigamini's eyes.

Coward as he was, he shook all over with fear.

"Mister Monday," he said, humbly, "how could you suspect me of thinking of such a thing? I respect you as a friend, and honor you for coming out on the warpath, as you say, after your master."

"Eat um soup," said Monday, curtly.

"Thank you. I'm only a miserable Bigamini, Mr. Monday, and really this condescension from one of your superior race is more than I can bear."

"I go to sleep now I eat fowls," said Monday.

"Worthy sir, may your slumbers be refreshing."

Monday threw himself down on a mat in the shadow. He pretended to sleep.

In reality, he kept one eye open, and his hand on his knife.

Lucky for him was it that he did so.

Bigamini dipped some black bread into the soup, and ate it, grumbling all the while.

"Curse that nigger!" he muttered; "the brute's done me out of my bowl supper. I'll square him up presently."

When he had to some extent satisfied his hunger, he looked round.

Monday was apparently sleeping.

Creeping up on his hands and knees, with a knife between his teeth, Bigamini determined to send him to join the witch.

He was almost upon him, and had raised his hand to strike.

Monday had been watching him.

With a snake-like bound, he threw himself on the assassin.

His hard, bony fingers held him down, and Bigamini was completely floored.

"What um do?" cried Monday, angrily.

"Oh! Mr. Monday. Oh, sir," gasped Bigamini, "don't please hold my throat so tight."

"What um come to do, then?"

"I only wanted to put something under your head for a pillow, sir."

"Lie," replied Monday.

"It's a fact, on my soul, it is. Let me go, sir. Mr. Monday, you're choking me."

"It um good job."

"I must appeal to the well-known humanity and universally-admitted generosity of the black or colored race, sir."

"You try to kill me as you kill poor witch."

"No, sir. Not me, sir. No, sir. Really, Mr. Monday, you are mistaken."

"Um never make mistake."

"Worthy sir," continued Bigamini, in a whining voice, "spare the life of a wretched being. Is it not enough that I am an outcast from my country?"

"Tell you what um do," said Monday.

"What, sir?"

"Um give you a chance."

"Blessed angels wait upon your footsteps for evermore, sir," replied Bigamini, gratefully.

"You shall sleep in um witch's bed."

Bigamini's repentance changed again to despair.

"Holy Moses!" he gasped.

"Um not like that?" asked Monday, with a grin.

"I'd rather die. There's a ghost in that bed."

Monday raised his knife.

"Die, then," he said.

The fear of death again attacked the wretched Bigamini.

"I'll do it, sir," he cried, eagerly. "Don't strike, Mr. Monday; I'll do it."

"Come on, then," said Monday.

He raised him up and led him to the bed.

Pulling the clothes down a little way, he pushed him in, but, at the same time, he cut the wolf's fore paws:

The wolf couldn't get out of bed, because his hind legs were still tied.

But he could use his teeth and his claws, nevertheless.

Bigamini lay still, trembling.

He could feel something warm near him.

What could it be but the ghost of the poor, helpless woman he had murdered, he could not imagine.

Cowards with weak minds will believe anything.

He really fancied that he was in bed with a spirit.

"If um move, um get this, mind that," cried Monday, showing his knife.

Bigamini cowered down under the blankets.

The wolf was never a very amiable animal, and recent events had not tended to improve his temper.

He began to use his claws, and he scratched his bed-fellow about the back.

"Lie still, granny," said Bigamini, in a persuasive voice. "Oh, you hurt! That's my—oh, Lord! do be quiet."

The wolf put down his nightcapped head, and began to bite.

"I say," roared Bigamini; "turn it up."

"What's um row?" asked Monday.

"The spirit of the witch is on to me."

"It um fancy."

"No, Mr. Monday, it ain't fancy. Oh, oh!"

"Tell um it is."

"It can't be, when I'm having bites taken out of me."

"Lie still and hold um noise," said Monday.

"I can't. Oh, Lord!"

Bigamini could bear the torture no longer.

The wolf was punishing him severely.

He jumped out of bed, and dodging past Monday, ran out in the darkness.

"Um little Bigamy too quick for me," said Monday.

"Never mind; um had a bad scare."

Going to the bed, he released the wolf, and went out of the cave to look for the tailor.

Bigamini was walking along the road, uttering moans and rubbing himself.

Monday kept him well in view.

Nothing would have induced Bigamini to go back to the cave that night.

He had been too much frightened.

His intention was to join an advanced post of the brigands in the hills, and stay with them a day or two.

He meant to tell Barboni that he had never been to the cave at all, because the soldiers were about it.

The sybil had said she was Barboni's mother.

If the brigand chief found she was dead, and knew Bigamini had been there, he would blame him for the murder.

But Bigamini intended to put the blame of her disappearance on the soldiers.

This was his artfulness.

If ever there was a cunning demon, it was the brigand's spy.

He knew where the gold was in the cave, though, and he meant to have that some day.

It was nearly morning before he reached the outposts

of the brigands, who were encamped at the foot of the mountains.

He was thoroughly exhausted.

Giving the password, he was allowed to enter the encampment.

Gus Darrel was in command.

A short distance higher up the hills was another detachment, commanded by Hunston.

While higher again, in a position admirably adapted for defense, was Barboni, with the bulk of his followers.

Darrel's duty was to make raids on the farms, and procure food, as well as to keep a good lookout.

When Monday saw Bigamini join the advanced post of brigands, he was satisfied.

"Got um now," he muttered.

Incredible as it may seem, though the black had no sleep for eighteen hours, and had been on the tramp most of the time, he felt no fatigue.

In fact he was as fresh as paint.

Instead of sleeping, he cut off across country and made his way back to camp.

CHAPTER IX.

"YOU CAN'T KILL A LITTLE MEN YOU KNOW."

When day broke, Monday was trudging along the road to Naples.

In front of him he saw some men approaching.

As they drew near he made out that they were soldiers.

At their head, on horseback, were an Italian officer and an Englishman.

Monday went on at a fast pace.

"Halt!" cried the commanding officer, as he beheld a naked black man approaching.

"Mast' Walter," said Monday, "don't fire, sare; it am Monday."

The Englishman was Walter Campbell, and the quick eyes of the black had discovered him before he was recognized in his turn.

The little coxswain rode up eagerly.

"Is it you, Monday?" he said.

"Yes, sare."

"Have you found out anything?"

"Found um brigands, sare."

"That's good news. How did you manage it?"

"Followed um Bigamy, sare. He bad man; spy of um brigands."

"By Jove!" said Walter, "I always thought the fellow was a bad lot."

"Where Mast' Harvey, Mist' Mole, and that Yankee man, sare."

"They're on the lookout somewhere," replied Walter. "But I have come out on special business."

"What that, sare?"

"You know Miss Lily Cockles."

"Do Monday know his own head, sir?"

"Well she has disappeared and left a note saying she is going to marry the Prince Di Villanova in the Castle Inferno to-day."

"The Prince is Barboni, sare," exclaimed Monday.

"Of course. We know that now."

"What um do?"

"I don't mind telling you I love Miss Lily, and I mean to stop this business if I can."

"Quite right, sare. Monday in love once. Sir Sydney Dawson—him dead now—try take her way. Monday stop that."

"Are your brigands far off?" asked the little coxswain, thoughtfully.

"Not so very far, sare."

"I've a good mind to have a cut in at them as I go by on my way to the castle."

"That not um bad idea," said Monday, approvingly.

"I can't make out why Miss Lily Cockles should be so foolish; but this brigand thief has established an influence over her, somehow."

"Who you think command the brigands where I see Bigamy go, sare?"

"Can't guess."

"Lord Darrel, sare. Me see him."

"Why, he's the man who killed Lily Cockles' brother."

"That him, sare."

"He is the brigand's son really. He's Barboni's own son, you know," answered Walter; "we've heard that from Lady Darrel and the poor boy they call Luni."

"We go and settle him, sare," replied Monday.

"But you look tired," replied the little coxswain.

"Monday got pluck, sare. Much to be done yet; Mast' Jack not free; Barboni alive."

"Come along then. Lead me to the brigands. A brush with the scoundrels will give me appetite for breakfast," answered Walter.

Monday accordingly turned round.

The little coxswain spoke to the officer in command, and the whole party followed the black, who led them straight to the first encampment of the brigands.

Scouts were thrown out by the latter, and they, following their orders, retired without firing a shot.

Darrel saw the enemy coming and would have retreated.

But Monday led the handful of Bersaglieri up to the spot where they were encamped, and they came with a rush.

The conflict was fierce.

Brigands and soldiers were pretty nearly equal in numbers.

The little coxswain singled out Darrel.

"Hi! you, sir—you fellow who calls yourself Lord Darrel," he exclaimed; "come, and have a tussel with me."

Darrel came forward with a pistol.

He fired it point blank at Walter Campbell, but fortunately for Walter he missed fire.

The little coxswain rushed at him.

They were separated from the rest of the combatants, owing to the brigands being driven up the hill by the soldiers.

As a rule brigands don't fight well when there is no plunder in view.

Barboni was not with them to animate them by his presence.

They had been surprised, which was another thing against them.

Seeing himself cut off from his men, Gus Darrel fought as hard as he could.

He drew his sword and lunged at his opponent, who was only armed with a pistol and a dagger.

The pistol did him good service, however.

His first shot broke Darrel's sword arm.

The weapon fell from his hand.

On dashed the little coxswain with his dagger and plunged it into his breast.

"You killed Lieutenant Cockles," he said.

"And I'd kill you if I could," replied Darrel, sinking back.

"I dare say you would," answered the little coxswain, dealing him another blow. "But you can't kill all the little men, you know."

Darrel sank back with a groan.

"I'm not very big," continued Walter, "still I've been big enough to settle you."

"Let me die in peace," said Darrel.

"Oh, I'll help you, if that's all," answered Walter, who gave him another stab in the region of the heart.

Suddenly Monday's voice was heard.

"Do um duck, sare!"

The warning came only just in time.

Walter ducked his head, and a bullet fired by a fugitive brigand hissed over him.

"Now I'll see to your father," said Walter, calmly.

Darrel turned up the white of his eyes, and then became rigid.

He was dead.

Lieutenant Cockles was avenged.

Having lost two-thirds of their number, the brigands scampered off as well as they could, and left the field to the soldiers.

The little coxswain was delighted at having killed the brigand's son.

Lily Cockles would be charmed to hear that the murderer of her brother had perished.

She was not revengeful, but she had her feelings, which prompted her to hate the man that had killed her brother.

Time passed.

Walter Campbell could not stop to bury the dead, and the body of Gus Darrel remained stark and ghastly in the sunshine.

"Now for the castle," said the little coxswain. "Lily must be saved at all hazards."

Several soldiers had fallen in the struggle.

But about thirty remained, and these, shouldering their rifles, began their march to Castle Inferno.

Monday went ahead as scout.

Walter and the officer in command rode at the head of the detachment, which, formed into fours, brought up the rear in a long, straggling line.

The river Volturno was crossed at a point where it was fordable, and the water did not come up higher than the waists of the men.

On the other side of the river a cheery voice accosted them.

"Hullo!" it said, "by the tanel! here you are; butting your heads against brigands, I guess, as usual."

It was Clear-the-Track Sam, on horseback, and with him was Harvey.

"We couldn't rest, after we heard you'd started," said Harvey.

"I'm glad we've met," replied Walter. "Because I expect we've got sharp work before us."

"Have you been fighting?" asked Harvey.

"Guess he's well blooded," remarked Clear-the-Track Sam.

"Monday guided us to a brigand outpost, commanded by Darrel," was the answer.

"And you fought?"

"Rather! I killed Darrel with my own hand."

"Bravo, young one!" cried Harvey, delightedly.

"I told him he couldn't kill all the little men, and just to see how he liked it, I killed him," replied the little coxswain, with a smile of satisfaction.

"That will balance matters. Darrel for Carden."

"You found my letter, I suppose?" asked Walter.

"Yes," replied Harvey; "we came in late, after hunting about all day. But tired though we were, we did not hesitate to start at once when we found you had come after Miss Cockles."

"Barboni has a strange influence over her," observed Walter, seriously.

"He has, and it is the more singular, since Lady Darrel expected to see what a wicked rascal he is, and the Viceroy and Barboni without the least are the same."

Walking side by side, they continued to chat as they went forward.

"Where's Mole?" asked Walter.

"Very bad," answered Harvey.

"What's wrong with him?"

"Such a lark; since Monday's been gone, we had to hire an English butler to put in the pantry."

"Yes."

"It appears that the man we've got, whose name is Thomas, is as fond of crooking his elbow as Mr. Mole himself."

"There's a nice pair, then."

"They got drunk last night, and Mr. Mole got into Thomas's bed. In the night they woke up."

"I say, sir," said Thomas, "there's some fellow in my bed."

"So there is in my bed," replied Mr. Mole.

"I'm going to let him know what I can do," said Thomas.

"So I shall let him know," answered Mole.

"Whereupon they both began kicking like Old Har-

ry, until both of them lay sprawling on the floor, and Mole fell on his head, which, not being so hard as the floor, was considerably knocked about."

The little coxswain laughed heartily at this story.

"Your Mr. Mole is a tall drinker," remarked Sam.

"He can drink a little," replied Harvey.

"He wouldn't blink, I reckon, if you gave him some old rye that would take the hair off a man's head, and made his inside feel as if he had swallowed a half-pint of darning needles?"

"Not he."

"I took his cask away this morning, because the doctor said he was to be kept quiet," said Clear-the-Track-Sam.

"Didn't he go on?"

"You should have seen him swell and bloat like a mad porcupine," said Clear-the-Track-Sam.

"I can fancy I see him," said Harvey.

"He looked at me hard, and says he—'Mr. Sam, I can generally use my tongue in defense of my rights, but you have committed so gross an outrage on me by taking away my cask, that I am silent, because if I was to swear for an hour, I couldn't do justice to the subject.'"

The young men laughed again at this.

"Any news of Jack?" asked Harvey, after a pause.

"No; Monday has made an important discovery, though," answered Walter.

"What's that?"

"He has proved beyond a doubt that the little contemptible scoundrel they call Bigamini, is a spy in the employ of the brigands."

"Poor Carden always thought so."

"I expect Barboni derived much information from him and the Contessa Di Malafedi."

"No doubt of it," answered Harvey.

"That young Harkaway's a cute little chap," remarked Clear-the-Track-Sam.

"Yes, he's sharp enough," answered Walter.

"He's got my name as pat as butter. What do you think he said yesterday?"

"Can't tell."

"Says he, 'Mr. Clear-the-Track, if you don't fetch back my pa, I shall have to go after these brigands myself.'"

"You are not old enough," said I.

"Well," says he, 'I'm not up to your age, but I'm a boy of England, you know, and that goes for something in fighting foreigners.'"

"That boy resembles his father all over," said Harvey.

"Guess he's clever enough to find the tail of a rainbow," replied Sam. "Anybody got any liquor?"

"Not a drop," said Harvey.

"That's bad. I feel like wetting my gills, if I can get a chance. What with the dust and the sun I'm pretty nigh baked."

"Perhaps, when we reach the castle, we can find something in the cellar," said Harvey.

"I can't understand what Miss Cockles meant by saying on the slip of paper she left, that she has gone to the castle," said Walter.

"Nor I."

"The Italian troops garrison it."

"Very true," said Harvey.

"I remember one thing," said Walter.

"What is it?"

"In the woods is a chapel. Perhaps he will have a priest there, and be married."

"Not unlikely."

The little coxswain gnashed his teeth with rage and vexation.

"Cheer up, old fellow, and hope for the best," said Harvey.

"Forward," cried the little coxswain, impatiently.

Leaving word with the officer to press on with the men, they urged their horses forward.

Gaining the top of a hill, they beheld Castel Inferno in the valley beneath, standing out boldly in the sunshine.

CHAPTER X.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE.

BARBONI, with an audacity peculiar to him, had determined to make Lily Cockles his wife.

He had a deep design in doing so.

Lily was a wealthy heiress.

If he could secure her hand, he could fix to some island in the Mediterranean, where he would be safe from pursuit.

Here, he thought, he could spend the remainder of his existence in peace and contentment.

As the Prince of Viminara, Naples was close to him.

As Barboni, he was a hunted man, with a price on his head.

In the mountains he could prolong his existence, rob travelers, and still be the king of the brigands.

This life had enjoyment for him.

Yet an existence of love with Lily was very tempting to him.

Accordingly he assumed a disguise, and went into Naples.

Lily was in the garden.

He saw her, and exercising the power of his superior will, he commanded the weak and trembling girl to be his wife.

We know that she obeyed.

She disappeared.

The only way she left her friends was a piece of paper, on which she wrote that she was going to the castle to marry the man, whom she still called the Prince of Viminara.

We have already seen that a small company of soldiers had been placed in the castle as a guard.

But with his hidden finger, the brigand did not care for them.

They would be drinking, smoking, and card-playing, as is the habit of the Continental soldiers.

As Walter had conjectured, he meant to make Lily his wife in the old chapel.

A priest from a neighboring village had, in return for a handsome present, easily consented to perform the ceremony.

Outside Naples the brigand had a horse in waiting.

The half-fainting, timid girl allowed herself to be conducted to this spot.

The brigand Barboni's magnetic influence completely overpowered her.

Lily Cockles suffered herself to be lifted lightly on the horse.

Then away like the wind.

Away to the mountains—the bandit's bride.

Attempts were useless, for she was far away from all who could help.

She had quitted her friends in rash haste.

What could she do, poor little bird writhing under the fascination of the snake?

The brigand halted at the sybil's cave.

Brutalized as he was, he respected the old woman, who had spoken truly when she said that she was his mother.

He expected to meet Bigamini here.

It was early morning.

Bigamini, pursued and watched by Monday, had been gone some hours.

Lily had been traveling all night, and stood in need of rest.

"Come, my darling," said the brigand, in tender accents.

She leaned on his arm, and they entered the cave.

He was surprised at not seeing anything of the witch.

Perhaps she had stepped out to gather sticks.

Going to the cupboard, he took out some food and placed it before Lily.

She could not eat.

Then he placed her on the bed, and waving his hands over her face, threw her into a strong magnetic slumber.

"Sleep," he said, in a commanding voice.

Her eyes closed immediately, and Lily sank into a soft slumber.

Barboni had discovered that he was a mesmerist.

This was the secret of his power over the weak and gentle girl.

The wolf came up to him and licked his hands, making a whining noise.

"What is it?" asked Barboni.

The wolf's whining increased.

He took hold of the corner of the brigand's cloak with his teeth, and tried to drag him up the cave.

"Diavolo!" cried Barboni, "there is something wrong."

Seizing a lamp, he went with the wolf.

The animal stopped in front of the hole in which Bigamini had cast the dead body.

Barboni stooped down, and saw something huddled up in a heap.

He stretched out his hand.

It came in contact with cold human flesh.

"Santissima Vergine!" he cried, starting back with horror.

A terrible suspicion crossed the mind of this man of blood.

Nervous and agitated, he again stretched out his arm, and exerting all his strength, he drew up the body.

One glance at his pale and haggard face was enough.

A fierce cry welled up from the bottom of his heart.

Falling on his knees, he exclaimed—

"Mia madre!"

"My mother!"

The sight of his murdered parent unmanned him more than he fancied he could be moved.

Man of cast-iron nerve and adamant heart as he was, he trembled.

A tear started to his eye, and fell upon the corpse.

Then his mood changed.

His face became only agitated with passion.

The veins on his forehead, swollen almost to bursting, stood out like cords.

Rising to his feet, he cried in a terrible voice:

"Cursed be the hand that shed this blood! May his limbs wither and rot! may all the fiends torture him in fire everlasting! Let him be accursed!—accursed!"

He cast the body on a bed of leaves.

One kiss was planted on the wrinkled brow.

Then he went out and closed the door.

Then he looked at the eyes that looked up at him with such a wild and horrible expression.

He went to the front of the cave, he sat bowed down, with his face hidden in his hands.

Monday's body lay in the front of the train.

He saw it as he had seen it, as he was now.

Saw it as an innocent child, and a man grown old in every sense of the word.

Yes, very lately were those memories of the past.

And days were coming up on him.

His mother was dead, and the rest of some cow and a man.

That was number one.

Then he was to know that his son, who falls along with the old girl, had passed it to him.

That would be number two.

Misfortunes never come singly; they come in whole battalions.

At length the sun rode high in the heavens, and its rays penetrating the somber recesses of the cavern, showed that it was time to be up and doing.

Going back to the sybil's cave, he took it up, as carried it to a new world, with which he let it fall.

On the top of the hill, the old girl.

That was the end of a world.

Quitting his repulsive task, he woke up Lily.

"Come, sweet one," he said, "time is flying."
 "I am ready," she answered, with a weary sigh.
 They mounted again, rode to the Volturmo, crossed in the ferry, and gained the lonely chapel in the wood.

Here the village priest was, by arrangement, awaiting their coming.

"Father," said Barboni, "I have brought my bride."
 "I am prepared," answered the priest.

"Let the ceremonies of the church proceed," said Barboni, impatiently; "and, cospetto! cut short your numerics."

They were alone in the chapel.

Not a single follower had the brigand with him.

Lily stood by his side at the altar, looking more like one in a trance than a living being who fully understood what she was doing.

Mesmerism, when long exerted, has the effect of weakening the victim.

Lily had been under its influence for some time.

So great was the power that Barboni exercised over her that she had no will of her own.

Very lovely she looked.

Pale, slender, drooping, she resembled the flower whose name she bore.

The priest began to read the services of the Roman Catholic Church.

He had not gone on long before the brigand started.

His acute sense of hearing stood him in good stead.

"Hush!" he exclaimed, holding up his hand.

A few seconds passed.

"Per Dios!" he cried in Italian, "the cursed Inglesi are upon us."

He was right.

The door of the chapel was thrust open.

"Here they are," cried Walter Campbell. "Tally ho!"

Barboni leveled a pistol.

The cap snapped.

"Would you!" exclaimed the little coxswain.

He fired in his turn; but his aim being wild, on account of his being afraid of hitting Lily, his bullet struck the priest, who fell to the ground mortally wounded.

The holy man clutched his prayer-book tightly with one hand, and held a crucifix to his bleeding breast with the other.

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart," he muttered.

He breathed heavily, but still clutched the crucifix tightly, and struggled to raise it to his livid lips.

"Holy Father," he gasped, "receive my sinful spirit, and pardon all bad men. Holy Virgin! this pain. Pity me. Pardon. I come."

Harvey and Clear-the-Track saw him by this time dismantled from their horses.

The little coxswain had hurried on before them, carried along by love and excitement.

They entered the chapel, led on by Walter's cries.

Barboni saw the priest fall, and gazed at Lily.

What could he do?

The odds against him were tremendous.

"Death to the brigand!" shouted the little coxswain, again leveling his pistol.

Again he missed his mark.

"Clear the track," said Sam, "this won't do. A pump handle is as blunt as a pump handle. Clear the track, I say."

"Dash it!" replied Walter.

"You're acting just like a girl going to get married, and are, for all the world, soft as a pumpkin. Clear the track."

A ball from the brigand whizzed past his head.

"This won't do, stranger, nobow," continued Clear-the-Track.

Harvey and Sam.

Harvey and Sam, and the brigand's arm fell powerless to the ground.

"Clear the track, I say," he cried, again leveling his pistol.

Barboni caught a glimpse of the little coxswain.

He took one look at Lily, who had fallen, fainting, to the ground, and disappeared through a door only known to himself.

"Barboni!" he cried, "bolted, cried Walter.

"Clear the track, I say," said Sam, "and I cleared the track," said Sam.

"Never mind him. See to Miss Cockles," said Harvey.

His advice was not necessary, for the little coxswain had rushed forward and was supporting the senseless girl in his arms.

"Ain't we to organize no pursoot," asked Sam.

"He may have followers at hand," answered Harvey.

"That's right."

"Better guard the chapel."

"Bust his biler," said Clear-the-Track, in a tone of command, "I intend to see this brigand and a score of his followers."

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"Bust his biler," said Clear-the-Track, in a tone of command, "I intend to see this brigand and a score of his followers."

"Not for me. I'm tee-totally down on the brigands."

"Cut along then, and see what you can do," said Harvey.

"Stop a bit; didn't you say something about the castle?"

"Yes."

"And there being a chance of liquoring up?"

"I did."

"Then I guess this child's a fixture. The sand on this continent is kinder on accountable."

"Well, it is dry," remarked Harvey.

"I reckon I've eat to-day nigh upon a bushel, and if that won't make a man's inwards want rinsing out, tell me what will, and I'll say I'm not thirsty."

Harvey laughed.

The little coxswain had, by his tender care, brought Lily to herself again.

She seemed to recover her presence of mind now that she was removed from the pernicious mesmeric influence of Barboni.

In a few words Walter told her that the brigand had gone away with his arm broken.

She shuddered as she saw the dead body of the unhappy priest.

"That was my fault," said Walter; "but my hand shook so confoundedly with riding all day, and the fear of hitting you, that it was quite an accident."

"Is he really gone?" asked Lily.

"Who—Barboni?"

"Yes."

"Cleared right out," answered Walter.

Looking up in his face, she smiled through her tears.

"I have been very foolish," she said.

"Wall," said Clear-the-Track, "that's a fact."

"It was not my fault though," she continued.

"How's that?"

"The man seemed to govern me against my will. You are all kind friends; you will forgive me."

"Quick as time," said Sam.

"We have no right to blame you, Miss Cockles," said Walter, "but we shall be very pleased if you think we have done right in coming after you and saving you from a thief and a miscreant."

"Of course I am grateful: only"—

She shuddered visibly.

"Only keep him away from me in future, or I know not what may happen."

"He's a man that'll bear watchen," said Clear-the-Track. "He's got hyena eyes."

"Yes, yes; it is his eyes," cried Lily eagerly.

"Well, now I guess I'm tired to death, and must to see you and Sam; and how let's get out of this castle, and make tracks for the castle."

Harvey and Sam were a good deal.

The little coxswain followed, with Lily on his arm. Sam brought up the rear.

They had not far to go to reach the castle.

Here the soldiers received them kindly.

Their own detachment, which they had headed considerably in their impatience, came up soon after.

Scouring parties were sent out after the wounded brigand.

Luch was provided for the English, and Sam quenched his uncomfortable thirst in a bottle of right good wine.

Lily recovered her strength, and soon became herself again.

In the cool of the evening the party returned to Naples.

The scouring parties came in without having found any trace of the enemy.

Monday accompanied Harvey and his friends as far as the river.

"Um go no further, sare," he said.

"Why not?" asked Harvey.

"Never live in um town again till um find Mast' Jack."

"But your wife Ada wants to see you. Come home for a day or two."

"Me love my wife very much, sare, but um owe a duty to Mast' Jack."

"As you like."

"Tell Ada, sare, um quite well, and hope be back soon."

"Trust me," said Harvey.

He wrung the faithful fellow's hand, and the next moment Monday was threading his way through the bush, to prosecute some idea which had occurred to his savage instinct.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK'S DEVOTION.

STANDING at the door of the chapel, Monday had seen Barboni making his escape.

He had rushed forward, without discovering any trace of the wounded brigand.

Knowing that the whole place is honeycombed with subterranean passages, he imagined that he had got away by some hole-and-corner way with which he was acquainted.

An examination of the brigands' cave had shown that there was a communication between Castle Inferno and the cavern.

A gallery cut in the solid rock.

Barboni had used this when Hunston's telegram had summoned him to fight Carden.

But though Monday was foiled for the moment, he did not despair.

Where was Barboni so likely to go as to the mountains?

Though Darrel's outpost had been routed, and him self slain, there was no reason why the brigands should change their headquarters.

They would certainly remain where they were until their master's return.

Acting upon this idea, Monday hastened to the spot where Darrel had been surprised.

The corpse lay where it had fallen.

Bodies of soldiers and brigands were also strewn about, which also showed that Hunston was afraid to descend into the plains to bury them, and anxiously awaited the chief's return.

Hiding himself behind a bush not far from the body of Darrel, Monday waited.

The sun was already sinking in the heavens.

A cool refreshing breeze came up from the sea, and agitated the sultry atmosphere.

For more than an hour Monday waited.

He crouched like a panther waiting for his prey.

Neither hunger nor thirst had any effect upon the wiry savage.

He had a duty to perform.

Jack Harkaway, his master, whom he loved better than than life itself—more than his affectionate little white wife, was in captivity.

The one idea in his mind was to rescue his master.

Suddenly a shrill whistle sounded on the air.

Monday instantly recognized it, as that peculiar signal by which Barboni intimated his presence to his friends.

There was no answer.

The brigand raised his voice.

"Vi saluta Barboni."

This was the password.

His tone was no longer harsh and commanding.

His broken arm had bled freely, during the weary journey from the old chapel to the base of the mountains.

He was faint and weak.

A tempest had been raging in his mind.

He was suffering exquisite pain.

"Vi saluta Barboni!" he cried again in a louder voice.

Only the echoes of the everlasting hills mocked him. Surprised at this portentous silence, he looked carefully around him.

His eyes fell upon dead bodies.

Upon Bersaglieri, in their gay uniforms, lying side by side with brigands in their picturesque costumes.

"Ha!" he cried, "there has been a struggle, and my men are driven back."

He took a step in advance.

"What is this?" he exclaimed.

Then came up a fierce wail, which went to heaven.

The man's sins were finding him out.

"My son—my son! Oh, God, my son!" he cried, raising his unwounded hand on high.

Again he fell upon his knees, and he had fallen in the sybil's cave, when he mourned his mother.

It was not his mother now.

It was his only son, whose death he had to endure. He had hoped much from Gus Darrel, and to see him cut off in his prime was a sore and heavy blow.

Al seemed lost.

"My son—my son!" he wailed, in his strong agony. His grief tore his already lacerated heart.

Now he saw how sweet were the paths of virtue.

How inexpressibly bitter the broad and pleasant road which leadeth to destruction.

A stealthy step came behind him.

A long arm was outstretched.

His throat was seized from behind, and he was thrown on his back.

He lay there gasping, with the cruel, suffocating pressure forcing his eyeballs to start out of his head.

"Mercy! mercy!"

It was the first time the proud and haughty, so long successful Barboni had ever uttered those humiliating words.

He had thought, in the pride of his heart, that he would never have occasion to do so.

But his sin had found him out.

This was a day of expiation.

Monday bent over him, and took his arms away.

First his pistol, then his dagger.

"You only got one arm," said the black. "Now you get um. You no more good than um dead shark."

Barboni rose to his feet.

In the presence of an enemy he became brave again. It was the torture of the mind that made him weak.

So he said:

"I am your prisoner."

"That am so," replied Monday.

"If I mistake not, you are Mr. Harkaway's black servant?"

"Um friend of Mast' Jack," replied Monday.

"Ah, I see. You perceive that my little white wife is a prisoner?"

"Yes, I see. Were it not so, I should not have surrendered so easily to you."

"Cut um yarn short," replied Monday.

"Of course you desire the liberation of your master?" said Barboni.

Monday nodded his head.

"Will you exchange me for him?"

"How it am got to be done?" asked Monday, dubiously.

"Take this ring higher up the mountain, and give it to Signor Hunston, with an order in my name for the release of Mr. Harkaway."

"Perhaps fail in um trap."

"No," said Barboni: "I am fallen. I have met my reverses and suffered—how keenly, none but my own men know; but I have not fallen so low as to be betrayed by my own men."

"Give um order and um ring," replied Monday.

"You will go?"

"Make you fast first."

"Do what you like with me," replied Barboni. "I am a man of honor, and a gentleman, and he will keep his word."

Monday took the ring, and went up the mountain, and gave it to Signor Hunston, with an order in his name for the release of Mr. Harkaway.

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"To Signer Hunston, in command of outpost No. 2. On sight of my signet ring, I order you to at once and unconditionally deliver up Mr. Harkaway, our prisoner, alive and well, to bearer, without following him or organizing and pursuit."

"BARBONI."

Barboni gave him directions which way to go. Gallantly Monday climbed the hills for about an hour. He saw a fire burning and brigands lying around it. Hunston was sitting on a large stone smoking a pipe. This was outpost No. 2.

Monday glided past the sentries, and appeared in the center of the circle.

"Mist' Hunston," he said, as he rose up.

"What the deuce—Monday!" cried Hunston.

"Don't shoot, sare. Me come as 'bassador from Barboni."

Hunston lowered the pistol he had raised.

"What's the meaning of this?" he said.

The brigands had sprung to their feet and grasped their rifles.

They saw the black glint again, and knew not what to make of him.

Monday held out the letter and the ring.

Hunston read the one and looked at the other.

"By Jove!" he said, "what has happened?"

"Barboni um prisoner; Mist' Darrel dead."

"I know Darrel was shot and our advance guard driven in. Who captured the chief?"

"I don't know, sare, to say sure."

"Well," said Hunston, "this order is straight on you. I have Harkaway like poison, but orders must be obeyed."

"Harkaway, sare, sare."

"Wait here, and I will send for Harkaway."

Hunston spoke to a brigand, who, on receiving his instructions, started off at a brisk pace higher up the mountains.

"Well, Monday," said Hunston, "it's a long time since we met."

"Yes, sare, knew you in Limbi."

"Of course, you did, you contounded piece of ebony."

"Don't you know, sare?"

"I don't know, sare."

"Best turn honest man, sare."

"It's easier to preach about it than to do it," replied Hunston. "I think I shall cut this life."

"Cut it, sare?"

"Yes, I'm about tired of it, and I've got some money. America would suit me."

"They've got gallows in um United States, sare," said Monday, grinning.

"Don't you cheek me," exclaimed Hunston.

"No, sare; no cheek."

"He brings back old times to you, Monday," said Hunston, after a pause.

"It's something like Pisang and Limbi, sare."

"Well, yes; it's a rough and tumble, unsatisfactory sort of life, and I tell you, I'm sick of it."

"You and I are enemies, Mist' Hunston?"

"No. You're Harkaway's servant, and that's all I've got a musty you."

"Give um Monday some drink, sare."

"If you'll tell me what's happened, I will."

"Can't tell all, sare."

"Has Barboni pulled that marriage off?"

"No, sare; it's still off."

"Who by?"

"Mist' Harvey, little coxswain, and 'Merican chap um not like cos he run down um niggers."

"Oh, have they got some one to take Carlen's place?"

"Yes, sare; Mist' Clear-the-Track."

"That's a rum name."

"Um rum camp."

"Where is Barboni?" asked Hunston.

"That um secret, sare."

"Did he show fight?"

"Um left arm broken, sare."

"It's all his own fault. I told him he ought to take men with him," said Hunston; "but he's so jolly pigheaded; he won't be persuaded. Are you hungry as well as thirsty?"

"Um could break um crust, sare."

"That's about all you'll get, for we're jolly badly off for rations today."

Hunston ordered some refreshments to be placed before Monday, who was glad to get anything.

He had eaten nothing since the previous night when he had been driven from his food.

When he had finished eating, Hunston spoke to him again.

"The luck's taken a turn," he remarked.

"Yes, sare."

"Lady Darrel and the real Lari Darrel, I hear, are with you, and you've got Emily back, and now Harkaway's going."

"I don't know," said Monday.

"Barboni, you said, ran, and gave dis over, and he was um killed. When I have thought it three times, sare."

"Mist' Monday, sare, sare."

"As I told you, and I'm sure of some one. It was Jack's servant."

"He was pale and thin, but he cast a glance of defiance at me."

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"Now," replied Hunston, "are't you a cantankerous old man a cook?"

"What? I am a prisoner, you must not insult me. They've taken my chains off, and I can kick."

"What then?" exclaimed Monday.

"Harkaway, Jack, you a prisoner, too? Poor fellow, I tell you for this."

"No, sare, I'm not um prisoner."

"What then?"

"I don't know, sare."

"Turn to Hunston, Jack said:

"Wait, you'll explain this mystery?"

"You're free to go when you like with your black friend."

Jack smiled incredulously.

"Be a man, Hunston," he exclaimed. "Don't chaff me while I'm in my present position."

"I'll be hanged if I'm chaffing."

"But—"

"Look at this."

Jack eagerly read the order by the light of the fire.

"Jack's face brightened."

"Thank you," he said.

"I don't know how it's been worked, Harkaway, but you've got your ticket-of-leave," exclaimed Hunston, "and as you know me as well as I know you, I'll speak the truth and shame the devil, and say I'm thundering sorry for it."

"Hunston, old fellow," said Jack, "I've no cause to love you, but I don't hate you as you do me."

"That's not my fault."

"No; you've tried to make me a bitter enemy."

"Haven't you given me cause?"

"I hope not; and I can leave."

"Well?"

"If you like to cut this lung, I'll forget the past. I'll let bygones be bygones, and give you as they start."

"Keep your start to yourself," said Hunston, snrily.

"Admit it. I've made you the chief, and if we meet again when you're going to the south, it won't be my fault, and I shall have nothing to uphold myself with."

"Leave me to take my own course."

"I don't say so, sare, for what you've said."

"Don't let me hear you can game better than you can catch me."

"Perhaps. Good-bye," said Jack.

"Go to—"

Hunston's last words were lost upon Jack, who had stopped away with Monday.

They descended the hill rapidly, and did not attempt to speak until they reached the plain.

Then Monday told Jack all that had happened.

"By Jove!" he said, "we've been making history. Carlen shot—dead—dead—Bismarck a spy—Barboni captured and we're—his marriage with Lady—tried—Barboni's—Lady Darrel and Luni with us—what a lullaby of horrors."

"Yes, sare."

"We must set Barboni at liberty," Jack continued.

"Why not shoot um brigand, sare?" asked Monday, with a savage glance of the eye.

"Monday!" exclaimed Jack, reprovingly.

"In Limbi, um cut him, sare."

"I dare say, but you are not in your native country, and I thought you had forgotten all those things."

"Mist' Jack, um humbly," replied Monday, humbly.

"I'm ashamed of you," said Jack.

"Mean no harm, sare, but think, Mast' Jack."

"Think what?"

"Perhaps never get Barboni again."

"You forget that he arranged that he should be liberated by you if his men set me free; and I'm a murderer, just and a lawbreaker though he is, that is no excuse for my breaking faith with him."

"You promise nothing."

"You promise it in my name. Say no more. I would rather lose my life than do a dirty trick."

Jack spoke decisively.

Monday was silent.

They came to where Barboni was bound to the tree, and Jack instantly set him free.

"We meet on equal terms at last," said Jack.

"I have nothing to say to you, Mr. Harkaway," replied the brigand. "My wound is still and painful. I am weak from loss of blood, and my mind is disturbed by the disaster which has befallen me."

"I don't want to talk to you," said Jack, curtly.

"Nor I to you."

"Thank yourself lucky I keep faith with you."

"Oh," said Barboni, slowly, "I know you were a gentleman, Mr. Harkaway."

"Which you are not."

"That is an insult," exclaimed Barboni, firing up.

"Dare to repeat it. I dare have passed over your head, you shall repeat that speech, sir."

"Hark!"

"You'd think of my work in a short time. Forget it! you don't know me yet," said Barboni.

"Lead the way, Monday," said Jack; "the country is strange to me."

"Come on, sare."

Jack and Monday quickly disappeared, while the brigand, slowly and with laborious footsteps, started to follow them.

He was that weak and thin, and weak from loss of blood.

Much of the blood had been taken out of him.

Still to be seen in the old man in him when the third day of Jack was over.

He had some ready purpose in view.

Barboni, like Monday, was weak and thin as he was, Barboni was not a man to be tried with.

He was not a man to be tried with.

But Jack was pleased at receiving his liberty and at all the good news, that he thought he could laugh at the idle threats of the defeated brigand.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK'S RETURN.

A very pleasant little party was assembled in the drawing-room of the house in the Strada di Toledo. Emily was recounting her adventures among the brigands.

Lady Darrel and Luni, who was much stronger and

better, made remarks from time to time to explain the mysteries of the cave, and its connection with Castel Interio.

Only one cloud remained to be dissipated.

This was the absence, in captivity, of Jack.

They did not guess that Harkaway was at that moment on his way back to Naples, accompanied by the faithful Monday.

Jack's absence notwithstanding, all confessed that they had great cause for congratulation.

So much had happened in so short a time.

The brigand's power had been crippled, if not destroyed.

Mr. Mole was very talkative.

"It is my opinion," he said, "that these brigands are contemptible fellows."

"They've shown themselves anything but that," replied Harvey.

"Tackle them boldly," cried Mr. Mole, "on the nettle principle."

"It's all very well to talk," said the little coxswain, "but it's not so easy to do."

His opinion of Mr. Mole was not very high.

"What does a nettle do if you touch it lightly?" cried Mr. Mole.

"Stings."

"Of course it stings you for your pains; but grasp it boldly, like a man of matter, and it soft as silk remains. Now, you've been pattering about, and coquetting with your tongue."

"We shall have him in a corner before long."

"Yes," said Harvey, "at Emily's knee, 'me give it him but's due to se days."

"Hello! young Jack, what do you know about it?" asked Harvey.

The little fellow drew himself up proudly, and shouldered a pop gun.

"Give me real shoot gun," he answered, "and me kill all the brigands and let my pop gun be!"

"Leave, youngster!" exclaimed the little coxswain.

"You're made of the right stuff."

A tear rose to Emily's eyes.

She could not help looking at him, and straining him to her breast, kissed him tenderly.

"My precious one," she murmured, "God forbid you should ever have anything to do with these dreadful men."

"The fact is," said Mr. Mole, "you cannot put old heads on young shoulders."

"Who wants to?" asked Harvey.

"No one. The significance of my remark lies in this way. Before I came against you, nothing was done. Since my arrival the brigand has had to turn tail."

"I guess your're tarnation clever," said Clear-the-Track.

"Thank you for the compliment."

"You think it was all through you that Barboni bust up?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Mole, with a complacent smile.

"Why didn't you set Harkaway out clear?"

"I have done the best I can in putting Monday on the spot. You may all feel it, sare, like a skilled general, I try a new card, and dispatch the black."

"A fat lot I expect he'll do," said the coxswain.

"I don't concern him just yet. So far my judgment has been good, for up to the present time, Monday has been a perfect success," replied Mr. Mole.

"I wish he may go all right," observed Harvey.

"But I have my doubts."

"Don't be afraid about Harkaway," said Mr. Mole.

"Why not?"

"That man's got as many lives as a cat. They'll never hurt him. I shouldn't wonder if he were to walk in at any moment."

There was an interminable laugh at this.

"Nonsense!" replied Harvey, shaking his head distinctly.

As he spoke, the door opened, and Monday rushed in, looking wild and savage.

His only attire was a piece of brown round his loins. The ladies uttered a shriek, and young Jack clung to his mother.

"How do you come?" said Monday, doubtfully. "We have no more from the bottom of our street, and I look Mist' Jack."

"Not a word, you fool," cried Jack, who made his appearance in the doorway.

"By Jove, it's Jack!" cried Harvey, astonished.

Harkaway ran towards him and clasping her in his arms, kissed her fervently and at length.

"This is the first sight of me," replied Emily, over whose eyes came a happy tear.

Monday's hand on the heart rung, and Mr. Mole was so much affected that he sat down, putting his arm round the little coxswain's hand.

A mass of geraniums and fuchsias overwhelmed them.

"I don't know if it's a compliment," said Monday, sputtering, with his mouth full of flowers.

"You're better off than me," replied Mr. Mole. "I've got to be content with a few flowers."

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"I'm sorry for the royal family you belong to," replied Sam.

"What um sorry for?"

"Guess you'd better chalk your mug," said Sam.

"Go out of this," said Monday.

"Certainly not. I'm a guest of Mr. Harvey, and you're the boss's help."

"You no right in my pantry."

"Turn me out, then."

Monday made a rush at Clear-the-Track, who struck out, but the black ducked his head, seized the American by the left leg, and threw him over his shoulder into the passage.

Picking himself up, Clear-the-Track laughed and rubbed his back.

"Guess that's a lick," he cried. "Where did you learn that chuck, Sambo?"

"Um name Monday."

"Well, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, who taught you that little game?"

"Um want to know?"

"I reckon I do, or I shouldn't ask."

"Then um better find out."

Monday was about to close the door when a noise of footsteps was heard.

"Who come now?" he asked.

A woman appeared at the door.

"What um want here?" cried Monday.

"Don't you know me?" replied the woman.

"You black woman."

"Yes; I come from Limbi."

"Ha! that my island. Who you want?"

"My husband."

"Who him be?"

"Mr. Mole. I am Ambonia."

"What!" cried Monday, "you Mist' Mole's wife? He say you drowned at sea."

"I was saved; for four months I have been very ill. Where is he? They told me he was here."

Mr. Mole heard this discussion at the door.

He got up, shaking with fear, and took a cautious look.

It was enough for him.

Retreating, he crawled under the table, making frantic signs to Monday.

"Come in, mum," said Monday. "How you leave em all in Limbi? Did um want King Matabella back?"

Monday certainly did not recognize Ambonia in the figure before him, but then she had spoken of a long illness, and that might have changed her very much.

"I shan't talk about anything," replied the pretended Ambonia. "What I want is my husband, and I mean to have him."

She walked in and looked about her.

Mr. Mole was nowhere to be seen.

Turning to Clear-the-Track, she cried:

"Have you seen Mr. Mole?"

"That's a question," replied Sam.

Drawing a knife, she continued:

"I have black blood in my veins. I will kill those who trifle with me."

Sam had no particular wish to be stabbed, and he enjoyed a joke as well as anybody.

Besides which he owed Mole a grudge.

Pointing to the table, he said:

"Moles hide in the dark."

The false Ambonia took the hint.

Seizing a stick, she began poking under the table.

"Come out," she cried. "Once I was happy Ambonia; now I'm a miserable Mrs. Mole."

Groans proceeded from the region below the table.

"I will have my rights. Santa Maria! as these strange people say, I will be revenged."

There were more pokes with the stick.

Mr. Mole had a narrow escape of losing one eye, and his upper teeth were loosened.

Getting up, he showed himself.

"What the deuce do you mean, woman?" he cried, rubbing his back.

Ambonia threw her arms around him, and held him in a tight embrace, as if at sight of him all her anger vanished.

"Oh, Isaac! oh, my Mole!" she cried, "do I clasp thee in my arms once more?"

"I wish you wouldn't clasp so tight," he answered.

"You'll have all the breath out of me."

"What happiness to meet again!"

Mr. Mole disengaged himself from her embrace.

"I say," he cried, "you talk very good English, Ambonia."

"Do I, dear?"

"Better than you used to."

"I've been learning for your sake," she replied.

"It's very odd," said Mr. Mole, suspiciously.

Ambonia clasped him again in her arms, and gave him a squeeze that a grizzly bear might have been proud of.

"Oh, you dear!" she cried.

Again Mr. Mole pushed her gently away.

"I say," he cried again, "you've grown taller."

"Fancy, my love," replied Ambonia.

"You're not all my fancy painted you. Get out; I hate you," said Mole. "Your absence has not improved you."

"Ambonia makes the best grow fatter."

"Not in my case. Get out."

"Would you insult your loving wife! Sit down," said Ambonia, giving him a shove which sent him into an arm-chair.

"Oh, Lord!" cried Mr. Mole; "oh, she's knocked all the wind out of me."

Monday's bell rang.

He went up stairs, and coming down, put some bottles and glasses on a tray.

"Um young girl want um wine?" he said.

"Let me help you," said Ambonia.

She fussed about with the glasses, and slipped a white powder into each.

Monday's eyes were very quick.

He detected the trick, sharply as it had been played. Taking up one glass, he poured some wine into it.

"You drink this," he said.

"Me drink?" replied Ambonia.

"Yes."

"I'm not thirsty."

Seizing her by the back of the neck, Monday forced the wine down her throat, and held her in his powerful grasp for more than a minute.

"Um got it all?" he asked.

"Let me go," replied Ambonia.

"Not got it quite all; some spilt," continued Monday.

The pretended Ambonia sank to the ground.

"What have you done to my wife?" asked Mr. Mole.

"I'm poisoned; oh, dear! Once I was a happy Sniff—I mean Ambonia—and now I'm a miserable Big—that is—oh, dear, oh, my! I've got the gripes awful bad—oh, oh!"

He rolled on the floor in agony.

At one time he would clutch at anything within his reach, and at the next press his hands to his stomach and groan dimly.

Clear-the-Track had watched this strange scene with silent interest.

Advancing to the table, he took up one of the glasses. Wetting his finger, he touched the powder, and tasted it with his tongue.

"Arsenic, I guess," he said, spitting it out.

A dastardly attempt had been made to poison the Englishmen.

In the wretch's agony his wig came off.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

He picked it up and gazed curiously at the writhing creature.

"Why," he said, "it's not my wife at all."

"Eh?—what's that?" said Monday.

"It's not Ambonia."

"Somebody play um trick."

"There's no doubt about that; it's a man. Why, it's Bigamini."

"Ho! Bigamy come here in disguise to frighten all, and then try to poison? But he get um poison himself. How him like it?" said Monday.

Finding he was discovered, the wretched spy did not attempt any further concealment.

He thought his last hour had come.

"Spare me, gentlemen," he cried. "Oh, send for a doctor; get a stomach pump. Oh! Lor! do something; I'm on fire. Oh, oh."

"He looks as if he'd been eating vinegar with a fork," remarked Sam.

"I think he looks like a cat in a dog kennel with his claws out," said Mr. Mole.

"Do you want to save him?" asked Sam.

"He is a spy of the brigands," answered Mole.

"Is he to die like this?"

"Oh, kind sir, save me—do something," cried Bigamini, writhing like an eel.

"Shall we hand him over to the police? If so, he will be executed," said Mole.

"That's best."

"Save him then, if you can."

"Right; clear the track," cried Sam.

"What um want, sare?" asked Monday.

"Wake up, kinky head," continued Sam. "If we don't want Old Scratch to have him, we must look sharp. Get out salt and mustard."

Sam poured some water in a clean tumbler, and mixed a quantity of salt and mustard together. This was an emetic.

He forced Bigamini to drink the mixture, and held his head over a bucket, having the satisfaction of seeing him throwing up the poison.

Still the pain continued.

Bigamini's limbs became cold and rigid, while he turned pale as death, shaking like an aspen, and groaning like a door in the wind on a rusty hinge.

In fact, he showed all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning.

"In another quarter of an hour he'd have been right off the handle, I calculate," said Sam.

"I must inform Harkaway of what has happened," said Mr. Mole.

He went in search of him for that purpose.

When Jack heard that Bigamini had had the audacity to penetrate into his house, under the disguise of Ambonia, and attempt to poison them all, he was highly indignant.

At the same time he was much alarmed.

It showed him how sleepless was the enmity of Barbonia.

At a time when the brigand might have been expected to be trying to console himself for his losses, he was, in reality, trying how he could injure his foes.

"This is most providential," said Jack.

"I may say, Harkaway," cried Mr. Mole, "that it was I, who, by a wink, aroused Monday's suspicions."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes, I have an eye like a lynx, and fancied that the fellow was imposing on me."

"Will he live?"

"Your American friend says so."

"We must put him on a bed, and keep him locked up in a room until he is sufficiently recovered to be handed over to the authorities."

"I'll do that at once."

"What a life!"

"To think that the wretched Ambonia had come back to torment me, though as I saw her sink I could not make it out," replied Mole.

"It's clear you wouldn't like to be drawn up, sir," said Jack, smiling. "You have escaped the water too often."

"Do you mean to imply that I am born to be hanged, Harkaway?"

"No, I didn't say that."

"You implied it."

"Not you, sir. You're long enough already, and don't want stretching."

"That's what I say," exclaimed the little coxswain, who had heard about the attempted poisoning from Clear-the-Track, and had come to speak to Jack about it.

"I don't want to be insulted by you," said Mole.

"I'll dry up," replied Walter.

"Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, impressively, "am I or am I not the learned professor to whom you have intrusted the education of your child?"

"Of course you are."

"I am Professor Mole, of Oxford University."

"Yes, sir."

"And specially appointed tutor to Master Harkaway."

"Certainly."

"Then it's your duty to uphold my position, respect my authority, and not suffer me to be turned into ridicule by anybody, and more especially to prevent me from being insulted by the low chaff of a Cambridge coxswain, who never won a race in his life."

"That's a crain," said Walter.

Mr. Mole waved his hand.

"You are beneath my notice," he said, "and I will not lower myself by wasting breath on such an animal."

"You old, pedantic humbug, you're tight," said Walter.

"Harkaway, you hear."

"Shut up, Walter," said Jack.

"I shan't. What does he mean by his check? I've won lots of races for my college."

"We know that."

"I'll have it out of him," continued Walter.

A short distance off there was a small pond, in the center of which rose a fountain.

Gold and silver fish disported themselves in the basin.

The depth was about four feet.

Seizing Mr. Mole suddenly by the collar of his coat and his trousers, he ran him to the fountain.

"Hi! help! hi! This is an outrage. Harkaway, help me. I'll throw up my post: I'll—oh!"

The little coxswain gave him a shove and he fell into the water on his hands and knees, looking like a big, awkward fish, crawling on the bottom.

Sam came out into the garden at the time.

He, as well as Walter, was an enemy of Mole's, and when he saw the professor standing up, dripping wet and spluttering the water out of his mouth, he fairly roared with laughter.

"Oh, look at him," he cried; "see him cutting his Jim Crow capers. Who's done this?"

"I did," replied the little coxswain, proudly.

"Let's feel your flesh; give us your hand. Guess he'll be out soon, like Mount Vesuvius on a bust."

Mr. Mole did get out, looking very damp and uncomfortable.

"I'll pay you for this, my lad," he said, shaking his fist.

"Don't you get excited," said Walter.

"I won't forget you, my boy."

"You poverty-stricken old Latin grammar, I'll chuck you in again," cried Walter.

"Don't taunt me with my poverty," replied Mr. Mole, "or I'll let out."

"I don't care."

"What are you but a penniless adventurer?" continued Mole.

"I know I'm not rich."

"Have you a trade by which you can gain your living?"

"I'm a gentleman."

"Have you a profession?"

"No; I shall have some day."

"Don't you live here at Harvey's and Harkaway's expense?"

"I am young Harkaway's tutor," continued Mole, with dignity. "I don't hang on and sponge on my friends, with a view to marrying an heiress."

"What do you mean?" asked the little coxswain, turning red.

"You may well blush, you idle young scamp. You hope to marry Miss Cockles, with her six thousand a year, and then you think you can live on her and never do a stroke of honest work in your life."

The coxswain was about to rush on Mr. Mole again.

But Jack laid his powerful hand on his shoulder, and restrained him.

"Don't do any more," he said.

"Isn't he an insulting old beast?"

"Yes, indeed."

"I'll—"

"No, you won't; be guided by me, please," interrupted Jack, in his quiet, firm way.

"It's rather hard."

"Whatever his faults are, Mr. Mole is my guest, and I'll have no more of this."

"Thank you, Mr. Harkaway," said Mr. Mole; "you're a gentleman, I wish I could say as much for some of your friends."

"Guess he's given you toke," said Sam.

Mr. Mole proceeded to place himself in a sunny spot.

"Harkaway," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"I am going to lie on my face and dry my back. Will you send Monday out to fetch me?"

"Yes, sir."

"And tell him to bring my cask, will you? I've got the cramp in the stomach."

Jack promised to do so, and, taking the arms of Sam and Walter, led them into the house.

Monday was better, but really was, or pretended to be, so weak that he could not answer any questions that were put to him.

He was placed in a room on the ground floor, covered over with a blanket and locked up.

It was a relief to him, and he fell asleep.

Monday had seen a strange old spy of the brigand. He said he had never seen him at any time.

and ultimately hand him over to the authorities, was to inflict another blow on Barboni.

"We've scored over the brigand again," said Jack, merrily.

That General Campbell would order the spy to be hanged without trial was more than probable. Even if he did not, the formality of a trial, his doom was certain.

He was hanged up on the scaffold.

But Bigamini was not dead yet.

No sooner was the door shut upon him, and the bolt shot back in the lock, than he sat up in the bed.

He looked curiously around him.

Then he uttered a feeble chuckle.

"I'm not so bad, since I had the emetic, as they think," he muttered.

He took another quiet look round the room.

"I've got out of stronger cribs than this," he added.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXECUTION.

THE beautiful and accomplished Contessa Di Malafedi had been tried as an accomplice of Barboni.

Among her papers captured by the police were incontestable proofs that she was in league with the brigand.

She had received large sums of money as her reward.

It was proved that she gave the Prince Di Villanova all the help she could, well knowing that he was Barboni the brigand.

She had turned her palace into a gambling saloon. False dice and marked cards were used.

The nobles of Naples, as well as rich merchants, had been plundered by her means.

All her friends fell away from her now that the mask was torn from her face.

She was found guilty.

The sentence passed upon her was that she should publicly executed.

Her death was to be a signal one.

She was to be hanged.

The execution was to take place at six o'clock on the day on which Bigamini's plot failed.

Walter Campbell had made up his mind to go and witness it.

"Say, Walter," he asked Jack.

"I think it's a capital idea."

"I don't know. We don't like the sight of blood. Nor do we like to see a woman hanged."

"Don't you, dear," said Emily. "I feel for the poor creature."

"I don't," replied Jack.

"I don't either," said Walter.

"I don't know what a fine creature she was."

"Heaven knows," said Walter. "But she had a way of her own, and she was a very clever woman."

"Walter," said Jack, "don't look at her as a woman. Look at her as a criminal. I don't like to see a woman hanged, but I don't like to see a woman who has been so wicked hanged."

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"Heaven knows," said Walter. "But she had a way of her own, and she was a very clever woman."

"I don't know what a fine creature she was."

"And I pulled off all scores this morning," answered Walter.

"That is right. Never bear malice. Capital wine this. Where are you off to may I ask?"

"To see the execution."

"Whose?"

"That of the contessa."

"Indeed? I heard something about it; but such spectacles are not to my taste. I will stay at home," said Mr. Mole.

The little coxswain and Sam departed together.

They found a large crowd wending its way to the piazza in which the tragedy was to take place.

Pushing through the throng, they came to a small restaurant and wine shop.

"First floor to let for the execution. Private room, one hundred ducats."

This placard met their gaze.

"Cheap at the price," said Clear-the-Track.

"Yes."

"Shall we take it?"

"I haven't the coin," replied Walter.

"That's nothing. I've got lots. You never saw an American travel without money. My father made a pile in shoddy during the war, and I've done something speculating in gold. Well, that's the place."

"We shall be out of the crowd," said Walter.

"I'll pay. Clear the track, there."

Sam pushed his way to the door, and taking some notes from his pocket, paid for the room.

They ascended the stairs, called for wine, and lighted their cigars.

The view was excellent.

They could see the scaffold erected in the center of the square, as well as the gloomy walls of the prison from which the contessa was to emerge.

Out of the surging throng, they could see everything without being jostled and pushed about.

"Good quarters," said Walter.

"Very," said Sam.

A double row of troops surrounded the scaffold, and at each corner of the piazza was a small force of horse soldiers.

The Englishman remarked a number of men in the crowd who wore slouched hats and long, thick cloaks.

They were standing in threes and fours.

A tall man went from one knot to another, and spoke a few words earnestly, as if giving instructions.

"Those fellows look deucedly like brigands," exclaimed Walter.

"Well," replied Sam, "I don't know that you are far wrong."

"Barboni's a daring fellow if he means to try a rescue."

"More wonderful than that have happened, I don't know."

"Shall you interfere if he does?"

"Not I," replied Sam.

"It isn't our business," said Walter.

A bell began to toll solemnly.

The gates of the prison opened, and a party set out on the way to the scaffold.

A line was formed by the efforts of the police and troops, who kept the people back.

No curses or angry cries were heard.

The mob seemed to sympathize with the culprit.

On the scaffold stood the executioner.

In front of the procession came a priest, carrying a huge cross.

After him were six priests praying.

Then came twelve soldiers.

After them walked the prisoner.

She was clad wholly in white wearing a loose robe, and her head and feet were bare.

On each side of her walked a priest, holding a crucifix, and whispering the consolations of the church.

Suddenly the priests in advance began to chant the "Miserere."

It sounded like a dirge for the dead.

At intervals the bells tolled.

The contessa's eyes were red with weeping, but she kept her head erect, and she did not flinch at the crowd.

Her long black hair streamed over her shoulders.

Behind her came more soldiers.

In their rear was another body of priests, and last of all came several prison officials.

The contessa cast her eyes anxiously from time to time round the square, as if looking for some one.

From the cafe where the Englishmen had their position, she saw a handkerchief flutter.

Was it a signal?

Walter Campbell saw it too.

"I say," he exclaimed.

"What?" asked Sam.

"Did you see that white flag fluttering from the window of the next room?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"I don't know. It's odd. How well the contessa looks! Isn't she beautiful?"

"I don't know what's too good to be true," said Sam.

Suddenly there was a great swaying of the crowd.

The men in slouched hats whom Walter had noticed made a rush upon the scaffold.

Fierce oaths were uttered, and knives used freely.

The executioner was killed, and the crowd entered.

All at once a great shout was heard, and the contessa, an Englishman, and a Frenchman, were seen.

Still the crowd was there.

The soldiers did not know what to do.

If they had known the truth, they would have shot them.

"I don't know," exclaimed Walter, excitedly.

A man on horseback, at the northern extremity of

the crowd, was seen to snatch a burden from the hands of two men.

He placed it on his saddle in front of him.

Then a loud voice was heard.

It rang through the square, and found an echo in the walls of the houses.

"Viva! viva Barboni!"

It was the proud cry of the brigand chief.

Away went the horse and its rider and his burden.

Sparks flew from the stones beneath the feet of the gallant steed.

In vain were shots fired after him. Fruitless were the efforts of the cavalry to escape from the crowd and pursue the robber.

He was off like an arrow from a bow.

Gone from the sight of the heaving, panting, surging multitude like a flash of lightning.

And with him went the prisoner.

The cloaked burden he carried with him was the Contessa Di Malafedi.

Barboni never forgave an enemy.

But at the same time he never deserted a friend.

There was a great commotion in the crowd.

The soldiers were striking right and left.

With cries of rage the mob scattered and fled right and left.

This gave the cavalry room to act.

But it was too late.

"Bravo!" cried the little coxswain. "By George! that Barboni's a plucky fellow."

"May I have snakes in my boots, and be whipped by a nigger, if ever I saw anything like it."

"He cleared the track, as you say."

"Guess he did that fine—rather."

The slouched hat men disappeared with the people. It was with some disappointment that the Italians separated and sought their favorite cafes or their homes.

They had been cheated out of the execution.

Barboni had rescued his friend and accomplice, the Contessa Di Malafedi, and soon they would be sheltered in the bosom of the everlasting hills.

Those among the crowd who were injured by the soldiers, or trodden on by the horses when the cavalry rode the people down, were taken to the hospital.

Soon the square was deserted.

Only a patrol of soldiers remained.

Walter and Sam returned to the Strada Di Toledo.

"Well," said Jack, "you're just in time for dinner, if the horrid sight you have witnessed has not taken away your appetites."

"They don't deserve any dinner," remarked Emily.

"I shall never like them again," observed Hilda, with a shudder.

"What are you storming at?" asked Walter.

"Why, you ought to know. You've been to see that poor creature killed."

"We haven't seen anything of the sort."

"Did you not go?"

"Yes."

"Then you must have seen it."

"There is no 'must' about it," replied Walter.

"Don't mystify me," said Jack. "How did she die?"

"She didn't die."

"Eh?"

"Barboni rescued her."

"I don't know—tell me! How did that happen?" asked Jack.

Walter related what had occurred, to the great astonishment of his listeners.

"I never heard of anything," said Jack.

"I've heard of it since then, and it is a strange story."

"Well," said Hilda, "she deserves to be punished, but I'm not sorry she is not off her poor thing."

"Not I," replied Harvey.

"You women are always tender-hearted," replied Jack. "For my part, I'd kill everyone who was in the slightest degree connected with that scoundrel Barboni."

"I agree with Emily," said Hilda. "The contessa has suffered enough."

"I don't think we ought to kill anything," remarked Lily.

"I'm not a vegetarian," said Jack.

"The devil must help Barboni."

Monday appeared at the door.

"Dinner on um table," he said.

The ladies and gentlemen paired off, and the whole party descended to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XV.

YOUNG JACK DISAPPEARS.

DURING dinner nothing was talked of but the escape of the contessa.

When the meal was over, the four gentlemen proceeded to the Cafe Di Europa, where they were expected to meet the elite of Neapolitan society.

Here they would be sure to obtain the opinions of the highest society.

They were not disappointed. The cafe was crowded with the most distinguished persons of the city.

Walter and Sam were sitting at a table, and Hilda was sitting at another. They were talking of the escape of the contessa.

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"The lunch pother and the mouth, now," said Monday, grinning.

At nine o'clock Bigamini asked for some brandy and water, and a slice of bread.

This Monday supplied him with.

"You're very kind to me, Mr. Monday," said Bigamini, humbly.

"Um like to do what's right," answered Monday.

"It's more than I deserve."

"That's true enough."

"I'm a wicked wretch. You don't know how bad I am, Mr. Monday."

"Um make pretty good guess."

"I've committed bigamy, and even murder. Ah, it was an unlucky hour when I left my wife and came over here to turn brigand."

"Soon be all over," said Monday, jerking his head on one side with pantomimic action, to indicate that he would speedily be hanged.

"Well," replied Bigamini, with a sigh of resignation, "I deserve it."

"Why you kill poor witch? Why you try poison me?" asked Monday.

"It's all Barboni's fault."

"Is it?"

"Yes," said Bigamini, with a shake of the head. "He tells me to do certain things, and if I refuse, he would kill me."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, it's a fearful thing to be a brigand."

"Um want more brandy?" asked Monday, thrown off his guard by the little man's submissive manner.

"If I may tax your good nature so far, I should esteem it a favor to have another glass."

"Very well."

"It comforts my stomach after this poison."

"All um own fault."

"I know it. Don't overwhelm me with reproaches, Mr. Monday."

Bigamini munched the bread, and Monday gave him some more spirit from a bottle which he held in his hand.

Presently Bigamini said:

"What do you think they will do with me, sir?"

"Give you up to-morrow."

"To whom?"

"Um police, I suppose. Then um be tried for being a brigand, and try to poison."

"It will soon be over. Ah, well, how differently my fate might have been. Mr. Monday, take my advice."

"What that?"

"Take warning from me, and beware of the first false step. If I had never been a wicked Smiths, I should not have been a miserable Bigamini."

"That's so."

"And if I'd never been a miserable Bigamini, I should not now be a condemned brigand."

"Honesty um best policy," said Monday.

"Oh, yes. How the lessons of my childhood come back to me!" said Bigamini, clasping his hands in mock humility. "How I call to mind the simple prayers I murmured at my mother's knee!"

He covered his face with his hands and wept.

The tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Don't um cry," said Monday. "Every brave man ought to be able to die."

"I'm not a brave man, kind Mr. Monday."

"Have drop more of um brandy, and then I lock um up for um night."

"No more, thank you kindly. I wish to spend the night in looking back on my past life."

"Um heard the news?" said Monday.

"What news? Do you mean about the contessa? Has Barboni done it, eh? Quick, speak man!" cried Bigamini.

He threw off his sentimental, whining manner, and evinced real excitement.

"Yes, he am rescue um contessa."

"Bravo! Barboni can do it. Hurrah! We're in it now!" cried Bigamini, getting up and dancing about the floor.

Monday stared at him in amazement.

"I say," he said, "um not dead yet."

"No, nor don't mean to be," replied Bigamini.

As he spoke he drew from the sleeve of his coat an iron bar.

This he had torn from the bottom of the bedstead, and concealed for use when the opportunity offered.

Monday shrank back.

Bigamini was silent.

Bigamini fell upon him with a suddenness which took him completely by surprise.

The bar descended on his head.

He staggered and sank down with an inarticulate murmur.

"That's a topper for you, my black beauty!" cried Bigamini.

Monday lay still in astonishment.

Bigamini was silent, and he was stunned.

Bigamini hesitated whether or not to strike again.

He muttered, "He's quiet now. If I kill him, it will only make them more against me. I should get into their hands."

The spy had his own clothes on under the feminine garments he had donned to represent Ambonia.

Slipping these off, he was once more Bigamini the spy.

Grasping the bar of iron, so as to be able to attack anyone who might impede his progress, he quitted the chamber.

The key was in the lock.

He turned it, and taking it out, put it in his pocket.

He had been in the house several times—he knew his way about pretty well.

When he passed the passage, he peeped in at the door.

Nothing was stirring.

Consequently, the library was left unguarded.

Creeping up the stairs, he paused a moment at the open door of the drawing-room.

Emily was at the piano. She was playing and singing a plaintive song.

Bigamini heard the words:

"And my darling, though absent, is thinking of me."

"He'll think of me when he comes back," he muttered.

Lily and Hilda were talking together.

Mr. Mole had gone to sleep in the arm-chair, with a pocket handkerchief over his face to keep off the flies.

Going up another flight of stairs, Bigamini came to the nursery.

A lamp was burning on the table.

In a small cot, young Jack was fast asleep.

From his pocket Bigamini took a rag steeped in chloroform.

This he laid over the face of the sleeping boy.

With his heart beating quickly, he waited for the space of a minute.

Then the drug had done its work.

Young Jack Harkaway would make no sound now.

"You're a settled member," said Bigamini, with a diabolical grin.

He wrapped the young gentleman up in the quilt, and taking him in his arms, quitted the nursery.

No one heard him descend the stairs.

The servants being at supper, the gentlemen out, and Monday laid by the heels with a broken head, there was nobody to stop him.

He gained the street.

Out he ran into the darkness. On, on, until the limits of the city were passed.

On the Pompeii road a carriage and pair was waiting. Near it a man with one arm was lounging.

"You've been long enough," he exclaimed.

"Pardon, signor Hunston," replied Bigamini. "It is a chance that I am here at all."

"How's that?"

"I got nabbed."

"It's all right now, though?"

"Yes."

"Have you got the kid?"

Bigamini pointed to the burden he held in his arms.

"Jump in quick," said Hunston. "The soldiers are about everywhere, and it's not safe to linger."

"I've heard the news, signor."

"Don't stand jabbering there. Jump in, I tell you, or I shall have to help you."

Bigamini entered the carriage.

Hunston took a seat by his side, the coachman cracked his whip, and the carriage rolled off at a rapid pace towards the Volturmo.

Lighting a cigar, Hunston offered one to Bigamini.

"I'd rather have a drop of something to drink," said the latter.

"Why?"

"I'm not strong enough to smoke, but I'd better tell you what has happened."

"Fire away."

Bigamini related the adventure, and Hunston, having compassion upon him, handed him his flask.

"I wish you'd poisoned the lot," he said. "But you haven't done badly. We can hit Harkaway through his child."

"Is it true, signor," asked Bigamini, "that the contessa is free?"

"Yes, we managed that very well. It was a regular surprise for the soldiers."

"Is she with the master?"

"Of course. Don't you know that the Contessa Di Malafedi is Barboni's wife?"

"Never!"

"She is."

"Who'd have thought it?" said Bigamini.

"She's been his wife this ever so long, and that's why she helped him and us so often."

"Barboni can do it when he likes," said Bigamini, in a tone of admiration.

"This is the biggest thing he has done yet, but he swore he would not desert her. We had all sworn to die rather than leave her in the lurch."

"Did you lose any men?"

"Only two. Lots of townspeople were shot and bayoneted, but I drew off our fellows directly we had completed the surprise," answered Hunston.

"I'm glad they didn't hang her, poor lady," said Bigamini. "I've got a horror of being hanged."

"So have I. Don't talk about it," said Hunston.

Bigamini uncovered the child's face, and the moonlight played upon the quiescent features.

"By Jove! isn't he like Harkaway?" exclaimed Hunston.

"Yes," replied Bigamini. "He is."

"He's the image of the old boy. I'd swear that was Jack's son among a thousand."

"Wonder how he'll look without his ears," said Bigamini, with a grin.

"Don't you dare to grin in that familiar manner when you're with me," exclaimed Hunston. "or I'll put a bullet into your head."

"No, sir," said Bigamini, submissively. "I fear for the child that you were so kind to save."

"Hear it in your own ears."

"Yes, sir, the only a miserable Bigamini. Once I was a happy man."

Hunston gave him a blow with his fist, which caused his teeth to chatter and his mouth bleed.

"Will you try that cant on with me?" he exclaimed.

Bigamini wiped his lips with the back of his hand, and sinking into a corner, rocked the child and made no answer.

But his eyes glared in the semi-darkness like live coals.

If he had dared he would have stuck a knife into Hunston, he hated him so.

As for Hunston, he kept his hand on his pistol as he knew the time would come when he would use it.

His cigar in silence, while the carriage was being driven towards its destination.

Young Jack remained stupefied with chloroform.

He uttered neither plaint nor cry.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HARKAWAYS.

MR. MOLE woke up suddenly and kicked over a chair. "Dear me!" exclaimed Emily; "whatever is the matter, Mr. Mole."

"I've had a bad dream," he murmured.

"What about?"

"I thought some one planted Harkaway in the ground like a tree, and then another man came and chopped him down."

"How absurd!" said Hilda.

"Isn't it?" remarked Emily.

"I believe in dreams," said Lily Cockles. "and I hope this one does not mean bad luck."

Suddenly Monday's wife, Ada, ran into the room. She held up her hands despairingly, and seemed in great grief.

"Oh, ma'am!" she said. "Oh, Mrs. Harkaway!"

Emily sprang to her feet.

"What is it, Ada?" she asked.

"Oh, ma'am, I can't find words. It's too dreadful. All a mother's apprehension were aroused."

Emily became deathly white, but did not faint.

Seizing the girl by the arm, she pinched her till she hurt her, saying:

"Speak woman, speak!"

"Master Harkaway's gone, ma'am."

"Gone?"

"Yes, ma'am. He isn't in his cot, and I've looked all over the house for him."

Emily sank back.

She would have fallen had not Hilda caught her in her arms.

"God in His mercy help me and take pity," murmured Emily.

"Be brave, dear," whispered Hilda.

"Oh, I cannot! My son! my child! my darling. Give me my darling. Give him to me, or I shall go mad."

At that moment the gentlemen returning from the Cafe Di Europa were an hour on the stairs.

They were conversing merrily.

Jack appeared in the doorway.

He saw his wife half fainting in Hilda's arms.

"What is the matter?" he asked, anxiously.

His voice aroused her.

"Oh, Jack! Our son—he is gone, Ada can't find him. Heaven help us," sobbed Emily.

"The child gone?" repeated Jack, looking at Ada.

The girl began to cry.

He shook her roughly.

"Why don't you speak?" he cried.

"It is true, sir," she answered.

"Where have you been?"

"I only went to my supper, sir, in the hall with the other servants."

"This is a serious matter," said Jack. "Dick, come with me, and we'll explore the house? Walter, and Monday, please."

Jack and Harvey ran up stairs.

They searched the house from top to bottom, but they could discover no trace of the boy or Monday.

They searched the house from top to bottom, but they could discover no trace of the boy or Monday.

The search was fruitless.

"Is the prisoner safe?" asked Harvey.

"We will see," replied Jack, a terrible suspicion flashing across his mind.

They tried the door.

It was locked, and, in the absence of Monday, who, acting the part of jailer, held the key, they were forced to break it open.

Succumbing to the vigorous onslaught from without, the door fell back broken.

Monday was lying on his back groaning.

He had lost blood, and was weak in consequence.

Raising him up, Jack placed him on the bed, and Harvey poured brandy down his throat.

When he could speak, he told how he had been attacked by Bigamini.

He knew no more.

Jack comprehended everything.

The spy had escaped and taken with him the child.

Leaving Harvey to hold up Monday's head, Jack sorrowfully retraced his steps to the drawing-room.

Emily was hysterical, and went from one fit into another.

Hilda and Lily attended to her, with smelling salts and other restatives.

Monday, meanwhile, was nursing for her children, and refused to be comforted.

"Bear up, darling," said Jack. "We will soon have him back again."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, between her sobs. "Barboni will kill him."

"I think not. What would that attain?"

"Revenge."

"Depend upon it, he will hold the child as a hostage, to make terms for himself," answered Jack.

In a few hours Emily was calmer, and listened to her husband's reasoning as that the boy was in no danger.

The last portion of the child threw the whole household into confusion.

Nothing could be done until the morning.

Monday was silent at his wife's side.

Harvey was silent at his father's side.

CHAPTER XVII.

YOUNG JACK AMONG THE INFANTS.

BARBONI had a true hold himself in the mountains, as well as he was able.

He had but forty men left.

Many had been killed in fighting, some had deserted, and altogether his force was considerably reduced since Harkaway had made up his mind to exterminate him and his band.

Hunston was his principal officer, and, as we know, he was shrewd as well as brave.

A position admirably calculated for defense was chosen, and rifle-pits were dug in the side of the mountain.

The brigands had no cave now.

They found shelter in the holes of the rocks, or camped like gipsies, under tents in any hollow they could find.

Barboni and the Contessa Di Malafedi occupied the chief tent.

She had long been his wife, and was very grateful to him for saving her life.

The horror of a public execution and the pain of death had been spared her through his bravery.

She had assisted him through long years, during his career of a brigand.

It was a singular thing that everyone who knew Barboni intensely liked him.

He was no vulgar ruffian.

The distraction in which his country was at this time plunged may perhaps be some excuse for the position he took up.

When England was badly governed, outlaws abounded.

The modern brigand is nothing more than a repetition of the outlaw of the past.

He is the result of bad government.

After occupying the position she had held in Naples, it may be supposed that the contessa felt the change very much.

She had to put up with privations.

But she had loved Barboni as he had never loved her, and she did not murmur at the inconvenience to which she was sometimes subjected.

It was nearly evening, and Barboni was standing on the balcony which he had picked his camp.

He held a telescope in his hand, and, putting it to his eye, from time to time swept the surrounding country.

That he was ill at ease, it required no lengthy examination to discover.

The contessa glided up to him, and slipping her arm into his, looked up eagerly and anxiously into his eyes.

"*Mio caro*," she cried "you are fearful of some evil."

"No," he answered in Italian. "The lion may be brought to bay, but he knows not what fear is, though the bullets of the hunters fly around him."

"Oh, *amante mio*," continued the contessa, "do listen to me: listen to the voice of love, and put this fear away."

"I will," replied the brigand, with a grim smile.

"When?"

"When I like," he replied.

"I am not," she said, smiling. "I address you by that name because it is the one I first knew you by."

"Speak on," he said, calmly.

"You made me love you when I was but a mere girl. I have since learnt that I am not your only victim."

"Why worry me with this life-trouble?" he replied, laughing.

"Be serious," she said. "You betrayed Lady Laura; you would have betrayed Miss Lucy Graham. I have heard all the scandals of Naples, and"—

"At any rate, I have saved your life," he interrupted, "and, seeing how kind and warm-hearted I am, this is not a bad time to choose to attack me."

"My sweet one," answered the contessa, with a loving look, "I do not attack you. All I want to say is that I love you dearly."

The brigand looked thoughtful.

"Oh, my own," sighed the contessa, "do not forget what I have been to you; do not despise the true love woman ever felt for man."

"I do not. You are foolish."

"No, I am not. I have done much for you. Think of the risk I ran in Naples. No one suspected that I was the brigand's wife."

"You speak the word as if it was a term of reproach."

"So it is," answered the contessa. "But I do not reproach you with it. All I say is that I have sacrificed my life to you, and I would lay it down at this moment to save yours."

"Perhaps you will have a chance soon."

"Soon?"

"Yes. All depends upon Bi zamini."

"Why?"

"What a plague you women are!" cried Barboni, petulantly. "You are always asking a lot of questions, which it takes a man half his time to answer. Go to your tent; leave me."

"My place is by your side," she answered.

"What!" he cried angrily, "Am I to be disobeyed? Begone, wadame. *Santo dio!* I shall strike you."

"A man who strikes a woman is a coward," replied the contessa. "But strike me if you will. My love for you is so great that I would even bear that insult."

"Why do you irritate me?" he asked.

"Because an instinct warns me that you are threatened with danger. If I am near you I may be able to save you; and if I could lay down my life for you I should die happy."

"Cospetto!" cried the brigand "is this the time for sentimental nonsense? I tell you my mind is distracted with doubts and fears. Here, Florio, Camillo! Come hither."

Two men holding command among the brigands approached.

"Remove this lady to her tent," continued Barboni. "Let a sentinel be posted to see that she comes not forth to worry me."

The contessa drew herself up proudly.

"It is unnecessary," the contessa said, addressing Barboni, "to subject me to insult at the hands of your men. The Contessa Di Malafedi has fallen, but she has never sunk so low as to have lost all pride and self-respect. I go, nor will I trouble you again with my presence until the danger I can see before us calls me for the last time to your side."

"The last time?" repeated Barboni.

"Yes."

"What mean you?"

"My prophetic vision never deceives me; besides the sybil cast my horoscope, and foretold that I should die to save the one I loved, and that my death would occur on my twenty-seventh birthday."

"How old are you now, Bianca?" asked the brigand, with a tenderness he had not before exhibited.

"I shall attain my twenty-seventh year to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" repeated the brigand, starting as he spoke. "Did the sybil tell you that? She never prophesied falsely. Her keen insight into the future was always a marvelous mystery. She told you that, eh? Say it again. What was it?"

He spoke under the influence of great agitation.

His lips twitched convulsively, and his hands were tightly clenched, while his eagle eye rolled wildly.

Camillo and Florio were still in attendance.

"Back, hounds!" he cried, waving his hand fiercely. "What are you doing there?"

"You called us, signor," replied Florio.

"Santa Maria!" cried Barboni, "do you dare to bandy words with me?"

Florio shrugged his shoulders.

"You stand there to listen to my conversation with this lady, knowing that you are! Cospetto! I am well served by such dogs."

"If it comes to that," replied Florio, coloring, "I am no more a dog than yourself."

A sharp cry came from the lips of the brigand.

With lightning-like rapidity he drew a revolver from his belt, and scarcely waiting to take aim, discharged a couple of shots at the laughing Florio.

"Fool, dog!" he said, with a heartless laugh,

as he saw the brigand put his hand to his side, and sink to the ground, which was soon ensanguined with the life-stream welling from a deep wound.

At the report of the pistol, the brigands who were lounging about looked up.

Florio was very popular with them.

A feeling of indignation pervaded every breast, and it was felt that Barboni was shamefully abusing his power.

Camillo retreated rapidly, fearing that his master's wrath might attack him next.

Several brigands crowded round him, to inquire the cause of the chief's anger.

"'Twas nothing at all," he said. "Florio had done nothing. Poverino! he was murdered."

Loud murmurs arose.

"Gently," said Camillo; "it is useless to provoke him further. He is mad. No one can tell whose turn it will be next."

"Well said," cried the brigands.

"For my part, I've had enough of it."

"And I."

"And I."

"And I."

"Friends," cried Camillo, "Barboni's time draws near. He is no longer the great brigand he was. Take my advice, and let us go."

"Where can we go? We are outlaws," said one.

"Have you not heard of the new brigand of Vesuvius—Toro by name, because he is a very Hercules? They say he stands eight feet high, is as big as a Colossus, and has the strength of a bull combined with the courage of a lion."

"Per Baccho!" said a brigand, "our worthy Camillo has spoken well."

"A Toro! a Toro! Down with Barboni!" cried the others.

"Hush!" said Camillo. "All who will leave Barboni and join Toro, follow me. I will guide you to his cave."

The whisper ran the round of the brigands.

Five-and-twenty at once rallied round Camillo. But fifteen remained faithful to their chief.

The seceders leisurely walked down the side of the mountain, led by Camillo, who had promised to take them to the cave of the new brigand named Toro, who had lately started Naples by his atrocities.

Hunston had overheard part of the conversation, but he did not think it prudent to interfere.

He was much annoyed and alarmed at this serious lessening of their already small force.

During this episode, Barboni and the contessa had remained in conversation.

"I regret," she said, "that the witch fore-said my death on my twenty-seventh birthday."

"And she said that you would die in a fighting way?"

"Those were her words."

"Strange," muttered Barboni. "I never knew the stars tell her false. Had my other friends told this prediction, I should have discarded it, but"—

He passed his hand over his brow, and panted abruptly.

"Am I to lose every one that is dear to me?" he said, at length. "Friends I have none, nor did I ever care to make any. I have lost brother and son; now you, Bianca, my wife, are threatened by the hand of fate."

"Perhaps it is a delusion," cried the contessa, wishing to soften the possibility of the anguish she saw he was suffering.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Barboni, scornfully, as his mood changed. "Am I going to play woman? Santa Maria! am I not made of sterner stuff than that?"

"I hope so," said the contessa.

"Let fate do its worst—let fate rob me of all, and let me stand alone, I will show my enemies that Barboni's spirit is not crushed. To your tent, Bianca, to your tent. I am in no mood for talking to women to-day. Here comes Hunston, and from his face I should say he was the bearer of ill tidings."

The contessa smothered a sigh and returned to her tent, in the solitude of which she gave vent to a copious flood of tears.

Her career at Naples was cut short, and but that she loved the brigand chief, she had little left to live for.

The prediction of the sybil, that she should die on her twenty-seventh birthday, in saving the life of Barboni, did not trouble her much.

There are times when the human mind is so overwhelmed with affliction, so stunned and numbed, as it were, that the near approach of death is hailed as a happy release from earthly suffering, and the hope of something better beyond the grave may become absolutely fascinating from its vagueness.

Hunstoni approached his chief with a downcast air.

"Well?" said Barboni. "You bring tidings of evil. Out with your news, man."

"Camillo has deserted," returned Hunston.

"Nay," laughed Barboni, "that is intelligence to make one merry. We have a discontented dog the less amongst us."

"He has taken with him five-and-twenty of our best men."

"Then we shall have the less to keep. I had thought seriously of shooting a couple of dozen of them to-night. How many have we left now?"

"Not more than fifteen."

"An excellent number for stopping a coach, or robbing a traveler," answered Barboni.

"Suppose we were attacked by the soldiers?"

"If we can't fight, then we must run away. Does your courage fail you? If so, you are at liberty to depart, Signor Hunstoni. I shall not reproach you. Barboni will say no word, if you quit him in an hour of need."

"If you were successful and flourishing, I would leave you," replied Hunston, "for I am tired of this life, and want to get over to America, where I can enjoy the peace and quietness with a little money I have."

"Go, then," said Barboni, with dignity.

"No," answered Hunston, "I'll stick to you, now. You shall be able to say that you have one friend, at all events."

"I am grateful," said Barboni, shaking his hand.

"You know I am not a man of many words, but I am sincerely grateful, and I only pray that it may be in my power to show my gratitude."

And Hunston turned away.

Barboni's quick eye was roving over the landscape.

"Ha! I see a form in the valley. Your glass. Quick!" he said, addressing Prosperi, one of his subordinates.

He placed the glass to his eye.

"Yes," he continued, "it is as I thought. Bignamini has returned from Naples."

"He holds something in his arms. He is successful," said Prosperi.

"Santi sima Virgine!" exclaimed Barboni, "this is great news. Our position is not so bad as I thought."

A scrutiny enabled him to agree with Prosperi that the man below was no other than Bignamini, and that the latter held something in his arms, which, in all probability, was the child he had been dispatched to Naples to steal.

Jack Harkaway's only son.

Soon the shadowy form in the valley was lost to sight, and an anxious hour elapsed before he reached the brigand's camp.

When at length he came, he advanced at once to the chief, who had been rejoined by Hunston, and laid a bundle at his feet.

"Ha, my prince of spies," said Barboni, "what have you there?"

"Young Jack Harkaway, signor," replied Bignamini.

"Dead?"

"Alive, if I haven't overdosed him with chloroform."

The chief stooped down.

He raised the cloth that covered the child, who was breathing regularly.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "You shall have a purse of gold for this. Get ye to the cook, who has the carcass of a goat waiting at the fire. I'll wager you are both tired and hungry."

"Thank you, signor. I'll attend to the inner man first, for though I'm only a miserable Bignamini, I know what's good, and the smell of that roast kid would make a hermit's mouth water."

The spy betook himself to that part of the camp where the cook was preparing the brigand's dinner, licking his lips as he went.

"Bianca," cried Barboni, whose voice penetrating the tent, caused the contessa to come forward.

"Did you call me?" she asked.

"I did. Take this child under your care, and see that no harm happens to it."

The contessa took up the young one, who opened his eyes and stared about him, the effects of the drug given him by his captor having worn off.

"It is Mr. Harkaway's child," said the contessa, in surprise. "I know him well. Often have I played with and given him sweatmeats. What is your object in bringing him here?"

"A free pardon from the government," answered Barboni.

"You will never get that."

"Then the child dies. I shall place my liberty and the child's life in the balance; Harkaway can choose which he likes."

"My pretty one," said the contessa, kissing the child with all the tenderness of a woman.

"I know you," replied the child. "You mamma's friend. Take me home, please."

"I can't to-night; you have come to stay with me."

"I want to go back to my mamma and my papa," said young Jack, kicking and struggling till she put him down on the ground, holding him by one hand.

"How old are you, my little man?" inquired Barboni, eyeing the child curiously.

"Me four and a half."

"Go with that lady, and you shall have some supper soon."

"I don't like you. I want my pa," answered young Jack; "my pa and I are going to kill Barboni."

The brigand smiled.

"It would have been well for your father," he muttered, "if he'd never got that craze into his head."

"Come along," said the contessa, "You and I will be good friends. Johnny, come to my tent."

"Do you live in a tent?" replied the child, interested. "I've got a lot of wooden soldiers at home and wooden tents; all I want is a drum and a trumpet. Have you got drums?"

"No, but I've got a nice little bed of leaves, and grass, and blankets."

"I don't want to go to bed. I want my tea; may I have some meat with my tea? I'm so hungry."

The contessa kissed him, and calling a brigand, sent him to the cook, from whom he presently returned with a smoking lump of meat's flesh on a wooden platter, a hunch of bread, and a jug of water.

After they had partaken of this meal, young Jack was easily induced to be put to bed, and the contessa, in her rich Italian voice, sang him off to sleep.

"Poor child," she said to herself, "what will his future be?"

Who could tell whether he would live to mingle with the world, or if his career was to be cut short by the rough and brutal men among whom the cunning and treachery of Bignamini had placed him.

Time alone would show.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PRESENT FROM BARBONI.

THE day after Bignamini's escape and the abduction of young Jack saw the palace in the Strada Di Toledo become a house of mourning.

Emily wept for her first-born, and would not be comforted.

The men were preparing for a journey to the mountains, with a troop of horse soldiers and a company of sharpshooters, who had sworn to exterminate the brigands once and for all.

Jack did not speak much. He went about like a ghost, making his preparations and talking to Monday, who was his chief adviser, while Emily was so ill as to be confined to her bed.

Clear-the-Track, the little coxswain, and Mr. Mole, were in Monday's pantry, which had become a favorite resort, it being handy for getting a glass of wine or a bottle of iced beer.

"My dander's regular up," said Sam. "I guess I shall streak it along like wrath, when we start after the child, for it's right down dirty mean to go and steal a poor child that ain't accountable for its father's going on."

"If they'd taken Mr. Mole, it wouldn't have mattered," remarked the little coxswain.

"Thank you, Mr. Campbell," replied Mole.

"My life may be as precious as a child's."

"Oh, Barboni don't steal lumber," said Sam.

"That's why he's let you alone, I suppose," retorted Mole.

"You old bundle of dried meat," said Clear-the-Track, "you're as ugly as a stone fence. So ugly are you, that I've got a pain in the eyes by looking at you."

"Don't, I beg of you, disturb the harmony of this little meeting by personal abuse. Be quiet, and pass the bottle," said Mole.

"You started it, and now you're looking at me as savage as a meat-ax. You're so mad, you're burning inside like a lime-kiln, and I wonder the smoke don't pour out of your nose and ears."

"You have a power of invective which I do not like to provoke," said Mr. Mole, "and I trust you will not trouble yourself to abuse me any more. If I say that I did not intend to offend you, as indeed I have the highest possible respect for the sanctity of your countrymen in general, and of yourself in particular."

"Well, I'll dry up, but I guess you're right about being smart. My father was so tall that he had to get up a ladder to shave himself, and we grow oysters so large that it takes two men to swallow one whole."

Mr. Mole laughed so much at this, that Clear-the-Track asked him if he was going to take a fit.

"No," replied Mole, "but I'll take another glass after that, and I think if we were to send for some of the Fusari oysters, we should make sure of a good lunch."

Monday entered the pantry, and Mr. Mole asked him to go and fetch what he wanted, but the black seemed to be in a great state of excitement, for he just took up a bottle, and ran away again without making any remark.

"Something's up, I'll go my death on it," said Sam.

"That's as sure as shooting, and I wouldn't wonder if the brigand's in it as usual."

"Go up stairs and find it out, some of you," said Mr. Mole, with his hand on the bottle.

"I can't you milk the cow dry while we're gone," said Sam.

"Mr. Clear-the-Track, you're very personal, and"—

"Do you want me to start in full blast again?" interrupted Sam. "I'll give you the jerks, if you want me to keep the thing warm and the pot boiling, old boss. You take my remarks without answering."

"I will," replied Mr. Mole.

"You're not the big dog of the tanyard now, and I've taken some trouble to show you what a little contemptible dog you are."

With another warning look at Mole, he followed Walter, who had already gone up stairs.

Mr. Mole gave him a look, which, if looks were fatal, under circumstances of extreme hatred, would have killed him on the spot.

"How I detest that empty-headed, chattering Yankee," muttered Mole. "I wonder if Monday would stick a knife into him, on a dark night, and rid me of him!"

The idea seemed to please him, for he backed up over it, nodded his head, winked and

washed his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water.

Jack and Harvey were reading a letter which did not seem to please them, and as Walter and Sam entered, Jack remarked:

"It is impossible I can consent."

"What is it, old man?" asked the little coxswain.

"A letter from Barboni."

"Has the oracle spoke?"

"Yes, and he says that he has my child and will only deliver him up on receiving a free pardon from the Italian government."

"By Jove! that's asking too much," said Walter.

"General Cialdini would do anything in reason to oblige me, but this is out of his power," answered Jack.

"So I think," said Harvey. "The fact is, the government is resolved to put down brigandage, and Barboni is such a celebrated criminal that he must be made an example of, as a warning to others."

"The cruellest part of the letter is this," continued Jack. "I am threatened I shall receive the poor child's ears in a basket if the pardon is not sent in three days; and if a further delay occurs, I am to shake hands with him in his absence."

"That means, he will cut off his hands," said Walter.

"It's a game all can win at," said Clear-the-Track, "and if we catch him, we'll see how he looks without his head."

"The death of ten brigands will not compensate me for the mutilation of my boy," replied Jack.

"I guess he's only done it to frighten us," said Sam, "and he's laughing a heap at the stew he's put us in."

Jack sat down and clenched his fists with impatient rage.

"Don't go on, we must keep a-pushing," continued Clear-the-Track. "You seem cut up, and look like me when I took my first bottle of soda water."

"How was that?" asked Jack.

"It took the breath clean out of me; my tongue felt as if it were full of needles, and my stomach as if I'd swallowed a pint of frozen soup, while the tears ran out of my eyes like a mill stream."

"I feel worse than that," answered Jack.

"Go and show the letter to the general," said Harvey.

"What's the use?" said Jack. "He won't let pardon Barboni, and if he would, upon my word I don't think I'll take it. If ever a villain deserved to die, this fellow does, and sooner than he should escape, I'd see to my poor child."

A buzz of admiration ran round the room.

Jack had spoken out like a hero, and each one present felt a tingling at the heart, as his fiery and noble words were spoken.

"You're real grit," said Sam; "you've got energy enough to move a mud turtle. Stick to it like shoemaker's wax. Cheer up; we'll rescue the child yet. I'm not going to curse all creation and cut my throat yet."

"Sam's right," said Harvey. "We must take the field again."

"Start to-night. We know Barboni's in the mountains, and if my life will help to save the child, Jack's welcome to it," remarked the little coxswain.

And now Jack Barboni's not worth the candle of a brigand, said Sam. "I don't think I'll take it. If ever a villain deserved to die, this fellow does, and sooner than he should escape, I'd see to my poor child."

Jack had spoken out like a hero, and each one present felt a tingling at the heart, as his fiery and noble words were spoken.

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guide, though I think I know the way pretty well."

The little coxswain and Harvey started at once.

"Keep up your courage," said Sam, patting Jack on the back.

"I try to bear up," answered Jack.

"It will come all straight, though it's a darned tough tangle now. Somebody said, 'whoever is, is right, except a left boot and wanting to borrow money.' If Mr. Barboni thinks we're going to cave in, it's all my eye and Mrs. Elizabeth Martin."

Jack was amused at the cheerful rattle of Clear-the-Track Sam, and smiled in spite of his misery.

"There," continued Sam, "you're a sight better. My jaw does you good. Ain't I a beggar to talk? Once at home I talked a horse's hind leg off, and wore his tail down to a stump."

Mr. Mole entered with a bottle of wine.

"Harkaway," he said, "take a drop of this cordial; or would you prefer a sip out of my cask. I hear that the life of young Jack is threatened, and that you are about to take the field against the Philistine once more. You have my deepest sympathy."

"Thank you," replied Jack. "I have just had some brandy that Monday brought me, and I am sure that if anything could do me good, it is the kind way in which all my friends have rallied round me."

"There is nothing like carrying a small bottle of sunshine under your shirt front," said Sam.

"I trust, Harkaway, that you will place me in the van to face danger, for I am well known as a valiant man and an able soldier," said Mole.

"You a soldier?" said Sam.

"Certainly; I am a great fighting man."

"Oh, cut my straps and let me go to glory," cried Clear-the-Track.

"I do not care for your sneers, and perhaps I will soon have an opportunity of showing you how to kill brigands," replied Mr. Mole, with dignity.

"You'll cut your stick and absquatulate, that's what you'll do. I wouldn't give a tin sixpence for your bravery, nor a pewter shilling for your skill. You're a stuffed lion. Courage! why, you haven't got enough to swear by."

Mr. Mole turned on his heel, and with the air of supreme contempt, quitted his tormentor, never to be seen again.

That evening, after sunset, the friends quitted Naples and moved for the hills, the orders of the officers commanding the soldiers being not to return until Barboni and his men were either killed or captured.

A couple of days' march brought them to the foot of the hills where Monday declared he had seen the brigands encamped, when he was lucky enough to rescue his master.

Sentinels were posted, tents pitched, and a regular camp formed to serve as the base of operations.

Scouts were sent out, and Monday undertook a journey to reconnoiter, it being of no use to charge up the hill, when the leaders did not know if there was any enemy there to charge.

Towards nightfall, a soldier who had been on guard, brought a basket to his commanding officer, saying a peasant had given it him for Signor Harkaway.

It was an oval-shaped tent, in which the friends had located themselves.

Clear-the-Track was playing on the banjo.

Mr. Mole was dancing on the grass and singing a song.

Jack, the little coxswain, and Harvey sat looking on and approving the general exertions of the professor.

"Go it, Mole! That's a twister. You can talk, too. The dog had a good can't after it you," said Harvey.

Mr. Mole did a breakdown, and stopped short, the pumpkins rattling down the hill in streams.

"I think I deserve a drink after that," he said. "Where is my cask?"

At this moment the soldier came up with the basket, which was carefully covered over with vine leaves.

"For Signor Harkaway," he said, saluting.

Jack got up and removed some of the leaves, disclosing to view a piece of paper on which was written:

"With Barboni's compliments; another present to follow."

Jack trembled violently as he removed more leaves.

At the bottom of the basket, carefully placed on a piece of clean linen rag, were a pair of ears.

From their size, it was easy to see they belonged to a child.

A cry of agony and rage mingled broke from Jack.

"The villain has kept his word," he groaned.

It was true.

Barboni had evidently heard of the approach of the force sent to capture him, and his first act was to cut off young Jack's ears, which he sent in a basket to his father.

The friends were horrified at this barbarity.

Jack was completely overwhelmed, as he thought of the sufferings of the child, and the danger that still awaited him.

CHAPTER XIX.

MONDAY HAS HIS DOUBTS.

THOUGH every effort was made to discover the retreat of the brigands, the scouts did not meet with the success that their perseverance deserved.

Nor was Monday more successful.

Traces of encampments were found, but it appeared as if Barboni never stopped more than a few hours in one place.

He was continually changing his position, and by this means baffled his enemies.

Jack fretted and chafed with impatience at the slow progress they were making.

Three days after the receipt of the ears by Jack, a child's hand was sent him in the same way. The brigand wrote thus:

"With Barboni's compliments. Mr. Harkaway is requested to shake hands with his child, who will be shot tomorrow if the troops do not return immediately to Naples."

"V. S. BARBONI."

The receipt of this letter intensified Jack's horror. He felt sure that his first-born was doomed to death.

At this juncture our friends received a reinforcement in the person of Lord St. Clair, the cousin whom Carden, in his dying moments, had requested them to telegraph for to avenge his death.

St. Clair was tall, stout and handsome.

He was one of those large, bony men, who combine great strength with magnificent physical proportions.

At the age of thirty, he was in his prime.

Arriving at Naples, and hearing that the friends were actively engaged in brigand-hunting, he at once presented himself to the front.

Jack and the others welcomed him very warmly, and gave him a part of Carden's coat, which affected him deeply, as he had been much attached to his cousin.

"Blood for blood is my motto," said Lord St. Clair; "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The Lord be with you, now, and, please God, I'll avenge poor Tom's death. He shan't call on me in vain."

"We are all of one mind," replied Jack.

"I trust you have recovered your child," said Lord St. Clair.

"No, indeed. He is dead by this time," answered Jack, who told him of Barboni's atrocity.

"The cold-blooded monster," ejaculated St. Clair.

"I am reckless now," replied Jack; "in fact, I don't care for anything. When I think of Barboni, a red mist comes before my eyes, I

only see blood, and I will never rest until the scoundrel who has murdered my child is as low as he."

"Where is the brigand?" asked his lordship.

"That's what nobody knows," answered Harvey. "He's a sort of Will-o'-the-Wisp, Jack-o'-Lantern kind of cove. He's about somewhere, but our scouts can't spot him."

"That wouldn't do for me," replied St. Clair. "I've just come back from the Western States of America, and"—

"What!" exclaimed Clear-the-Track. "Have you been to the States?"

"Yes."

"Have you been south as far as Masonville, in Texas, where I was raised?"

"I've been there," replied St. Clair.

"Do you know Snack-nasty Jim, and Boston Bob, and Plug-ugly Tom? Oh! scissors! ain't he ugly? Why, he's as odd-looking as a blue pig with a saffron-colored tail. Oh, my! I'm as happy as an oyster in June to meet you, stranger; let's feel your flesh."

He held out his hand, which the good-natured Englishman took with the same heartiness as it was offered.

"You and I'll have a palavar after a bit," he said. "At present I want to tell a little bit of a story."

"Go on. I reckon I ain't so contemptuously mean as to stop you. We understand one another, and I reckon when you speak to me, you ain't talking Choctaw to a Chinaman," returned Clear-the-Track.

Lord St. Clair smiled, but was not surprised or offended at the volubility of the American, for, being a traveled Englishman, he had got rid of all that stupid pride of class which makes our stay-at-home noblemen so disagreeable and exclusive.

"Clear the track," continued Sam; "it's as hard to make me dry up as it is to make a hen sit when she ain't in the humor for it, though I once broke a fowl's heart by giving her six china door-knobs to sit on instead of eggs, and she very nearly busted herself a-trying to hatch that brood out. But I'm at it again; clear the track. It's all Mole's fault."

"No familiarity, if you please, sir," said the professor. "To my friends I am Mole. To you, I am Mr. Mole, and I protest once more against being insulted by an American monkey."

"Oh, gosh! roll up!" cried Sam. "That's a crusher. Ain't he got my name pat? I'm a regular rino-tailed screamer."

"Will you let me tell my story?" asked Lord St. Clair.

"Clear the track; I've done," answered Sam. "I'm as short as a pie-crust."

"In Kansas I went bear hunting," said St. Clair.

"We walked four miles and could see no bear, but we found bear tracks, and that enabled us to track the grizzly to his den."

"You mean to say that we ought to find brigand tracks," said Jack.

"That's it; and if anyone will accompany me, I will see if I can't discover them."

The suggestion was a good one, but as Monday had failed in the very same attempt, Jack did not hope much from it, though he said nothing to discourage the new-comer.

Monday was constantly missing from the camp.

He made long journeys, and said nothing about them when he returned, though Jack questioned him once or twice.

All he would say was:

"Me not believe um child dead, sare."

"But, returned Jack, "how could he live with his poor child out off? Oh, he's dead, sure. Comes on his mother's side. Then how can he live?"

"Monday go back again, sare, and think um a little bit um child."

Jack shook his head sadly, and Monday once more climbed up the side of the mountain.

I was a wild and stormy night.

All day long the heat had been oppressive.

Scarcely a breath of air stirred the atmosphere.

It was like being in a vapor bath.

But to Monday this made no difference, because he was used to just such a climate.

The lightning flashed.

The thunder rolled.

In the distance Vesuvius could be seen in a state of eruption, throwing up clouds of lava, stones and cinders.

At length the rain began to fall.

The parched and arid earth literally steamed as the rain fell on it, but Monday pushed on.

It was a night he could have wished for.

He had wandered over the mountain so often, that he knew his way about pretty well.

Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a deafening peal of thunder, caused him to stop.

Something brushed past him.

He grasped his knife more firmly, thinking he was near the brigand's hut; and another flash, which lit up the surrounding scenery, and made every object as clear as in broad daylight, showed him that the thing which had brushed past him was not a man.

It was a wolf.

The animal licked his hand, and it instantly occurred to him that it was the same one he once seen in the sybil's cave.

"Um Bigamini's wolf," he said, with a grin, as he thought of the night in the cave; "what um do here?"

Stroking the creature's neck and head, Monday reflected.

The wolf had most probably followed Barboni to the mountains.

If so, the brigands were somewhere near.

Full of this idea, he sat down and waited for daybreak, while the wolf, who knew him again, lay like a dog at his side.

When the first streaks of rosy-tinged morn crimsoned the sky, Monday sprang up.

In a hollow, carefully concealed by nature and overhanging brushwood, he saw a column of smoke curling lazily upwards.

The wolf looked at him, as much as to say:

"It is breakfast time, and I must go and join my friends."

Then he trotted down the bank and was lost to sight.

Creeping on his belly, Monday reached the side of the hollow, and looked down.

Below were two tents, and round them were grouped in picturesque attitudes, the small band of men who remained faithful to Barboni.

"Um brigands," said Monday, joyfully. "Oh, Sally come up, won't Mast' Jack be pleased? It make um heart jump for um joy."

He remained watching for some time, but could see nothing of the child; and at last, knowing how valuable time was, he reluctantly quitted the spot, and hastened to the plain below so give the glad tidings to the soldiers.

When he reached the encampment, he rushed at once to Jack's tent.

Breakfast was being prepared by Mr. Mole and Lord St. Clair, who was an old campaigner, and could make an omelette in the crown of an old hat, if he hadn't a frying-pan.

Jack was boiling the kettle, while Harvey and the little coxswain, aided by Clear-the-Track-Sam, laid the cups and saucers on the grass.

"Monday," said Jack, looking up.

"Yes, sare," replied the black, "um find um brigands. Come up hill, quick, or p'raps they go like birds."

"Where are they?"

"Bout two miles up."

"How many of them?"

"Not more than thirty. Couldn't see um all. Call um soldiers, sare."

"Did, did you see my child?" asked Jack, in a faltering voice.

"No, sare. Um not see young Mast' Jack, but there two tents, and p'raps um child in one. Monday have not time to wait, cos might slip away."

All thoughts of breakfast were thrown to the winds.

The news flew like wildfire through the camp, and the men were under arms directly.

The cavalry remained in charge of the camp, as they could be of no use in the hills, and only the Bersagliery were taken to the attack.

"This is great news," observed Mr. Mole, shouldering a rifle. "I wish Monday could put off his arrival half an hour, though, as my belly cries cupboard, and I crave to break my fast."

He put some bread in his pockets to eat on the way.

The friends lighted their pipes, and marched with the soldiers gayly up the sides of the mountain.

Monday was the pioneer and led the way.

Not a sound was uttered, and every one proceeded with the utmost caution, lest an alarm should be given, and the brigands, being warned, should succeed in making their escape through the many passes and defiles, with which they were well acquainted.

It was an anxious moment for Jack.

If the attack was successful, he would know if his dear child was alive or dead.

He determined to single out Barboni.

"One of us shall die to-day," he muttered through his clenched teeth.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BRIGANDS AT BAY.

BARBONI knew from his spies that the English, with a large force of soldiers, were after him.

This made him very cautious in his movements, and he continually shifted his position.

The prediction of coming danger made by the contessa was not verified, and he laughed at her fears.

It was a lovely morning, such as one can only see beneath the beautiful blue sky of Italy, which inspires poets and painters.

The contessa came from her tent.

Barboni was standing in the hollow where he had pitched his tent, leaning moodily upon a rifle, his eyes fixed upon the ground and his mind engrossed with thought.

The rustle of the contessa's dress roused him from his reverie.

"You are thoughtful," she said.

"I am tired of inaction," he replied, "and I burn to show these English that I've got the power and the will to work them harm."

"Would that we could retire in safety," she said.

"I expected that my threats about the child would induce Harkaway to listen to the terms I had proposed."

"And will he not?"

"He makes no sign," remarked Barboni, gloomily. "To-day I will move the camp nearer the plain, and if I see a chance of escaping, I will retire to Sicily, though I fear there is more safety in the mountains than on the coast, which, with the price set upon my head, is sure to be well guarded."

"You laughed at my prediction," said the contessa.

"Because you prophesied that you were to die on your twenty-seventh birthday."

"It was the sybil's prediction."

"No matter; the day is gone, and you are still alive."

"I find I made a mistake in the day," replied the contessa, with a shiver.

"A mistake?"

"Yes; my troubles had made me confuse dates. It is to-day that I am twenty-seven, and the shadow of death already encompasses me. When I am gone, should you think of me, make me a grave on the mountains where the sunbeams rest when they promise a glorious morrow."

"You will not die," replied Barboni, though his face showed that he was ill at ease.

He was of a superstitious nature, and his confidence in the prophetic power of the old witch, his mother, had always been very strong.

"Where is the child?" asked Barboni.

"He sleeps."

Suddenly the contessa turned her head and uttered a loud cry.

The wolf that Monday had seen near the encampment, and which, being well known to the brigands, was allowed to stroll about at will, and eat up such scraps and odds as he could find, ran in at the opening of the tent in which the child was sleeping.

"The wolf! the wolf!" exclaimed the contessa.

"Where?" demanded Barboni.

She pointed to the tent, from which the wolf emerged, bearing something in his mouth.

It was young Jack, who, alarmed at the attack of the wolf, clung tightly to the animal's neck.

The animal clambered up the bush-covered side of the pit, and made off with his prey.

Barboni raised his rifle to his shoulder.

But he hesitated to fire for fear of killing the child.

The momentary hesitation enabled the creature to escape with his precious burden.

"Curse the wolf!" said Barboni. "Santo Dio! what is the meaning of this?"

"The savage brute will kill the child," said the contessa.

"Away, there, a dozen of you! After the wolf, and bring back the brat alive or dead."

Several brigands began to ascend the side of the hollow in which they were camped.

The foremost one had scarcely reached the top of the enclosure, when a report was heard, and he fell back, throwing up his arms, and rolled a corpse at the feet of his comrades.

"Betrayed or surprised," cried Barboni. "Per Baccho! the soldiers are upon us. Back, for your life, Bianca, back!"

He had scarcely uttered these words when the howl of the kill was alive with cries.

"Fire, that's fire! Fear in a volley, quick, or, cospetto! we die like rats in a pit," continued the brigand chief.

Hunston and his men were not slow in obeying this order.

An irregular volley was fired, followed by a steady discharge all along the military line.

Soldiers and brigands both fell fast.

The contessa threw herself before Barboni, heroically exposing her own life to save him.

In vain he strove to persuade her to fly.

"Seek the private pass," he cried; "you know it well; it will take you through the rock. If you love me, fly, Bianca!"

"No," she replied, bravely. "My place is at your side."

"This is madness," he replied, firing his revolver point blank at the soldiers who were swarming down the sides.

"This day I will fulfill my destiny," was the calm reply.

The English had been a little behind the soldiers in the first attack, but nothing could check their impetuosity when the firing began.

Harkaway and his friends poured down into the hollow.

Bullets flew wildly around them, but the fire of the brigands was beginning to slacken, and only a few remained alive and unwounded.

"Down to the brigands! Down with Barboni!" cried the little cowman, who scrambled down amongst the trees and bracken.

It was an exciting scene, though the vision was somewhat obscured by the cloud of smoke proceeding from the powder, which now enveloped the hollow as with a misty haze arising from a morning fog.

Barboni saw Walter hurrying towards him, and falling slowly down, he caught his pistol.

The bullet struck his leg, and with a cry of pain the little cowman tumbled heavily down, and lay motionless on the ground by the side of a fallen brigand.

Jack was not in the hollow, and leaving a path, he escaped himself.

"My own, where is my child?"

The contessa pointed to the tent where Barboni and the child had been, and she saw, so that she knew the child was dead.

At the same moment Jack fired, in a frenzy of desperation, and the ball entered the breast of the contessa.

The prophecy was fulfilled.

Casting a glance of love at Barboni, her lips softly murmured the words:

"Caro mio sposo!"

She sank to the ground, her eyes closed, and all that was mortal of the beautiful and accomplished Contessa Di Malafedia had passed away forever.

The brigand uttered a howl like that of a wild beast.

For years he had been secretly married to this woman, and he loved her.

It seemed as if every human being that he cared for was to be cut off and taken from him, until he stood alone in the world, like an aged tree stripped of all its branches, towering grandly in the forest with its gnarled and naked trunk.

He stifled his grief, and choking back a sob which rose unbidden to his lips, the man of blood and iron prepared once more to face his enemies.

His pistol was empty.

The seven chambers had been fired, and he had no time to load again.

The smoke cleared off slightly, and he got a glimpse of a head, at which he threw his pistol with crushing effect.

It was Harvey, who fell stunned.

Feeling for his sword, he drew it from the scabbard, and began to slash right and left.

"Vi saluta Barboni!"

His battle-cry rang out loudly and proudly on the morning air.

"Hold on, and let them have it! I'm here," said Hunston.

"Back to back," replied Barboni.

Hunston placed his back against that of his chief, and they kept off all assailants.

"Vi saluta Barboni!" cried the brigand.

"I'm a coming, signor," said Barboni. "You drop 'em, noble signor, and I'll stab 'em with my knife. Oh, ain't it getting jolly hot!"

The soldier had been obliged to give up the hope of being able to shoot all the brigands, because the bravery of the English had induced them to storm the hollow.

If they continued to fire, they might kill friends as well as foes.

The bugle sounded.

"Cease firing."

Those up above could only guess what was going on below.

But they did not much care for the English, and if the latter choose to rush like demons to the attack, they might fight it out, for all the Italians cared.

The combatants in the hollow looked like a body of ghosts fighting amid sulphurous fumes arising from the bottomless pit.

Lord St. Clair found himself opposed to Hunston, while Jack and Barboni were making the sparks fly from their swords.

"Hullo, there! Who's who, and which is which? Clear the track! I'm on the grand rampage, and I guess it's a case of fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of a brigand! And I'm going in as strong as ever!—afew!" exclaimed Sam.

He groped his way through the smoke, and stumbled over dead bodies at every step.

All the brigands, except Barboni, Hunston, and Bigamini, had either fallen or were obliged at the surprise that they had run away.

"Help! help!" cried a feeble voice.

"Who are you?" asked Sam.

"A brigand's got me by the throat. It's Mr. Mole—help! I—I tumbled down the bank—help!"

Sam went on his hands and knees, and found the professor in the grasp of a brigand, who was trying to find his knife to kill him.

But he had dropped it somewhere, which little accident had saved Mr. Mole's life.

The misty atmosphere began to lift, now the day opened.

Sam looked for Mr. Mole from the Brig-

and, and, clubbing his rifle, brought it down on the skull of the latter with a force that made the brains fly in all directions.

"Guess he's started for kingdom come, and hasn't got a return ticket," he said, complacently.

Jack, meanwhile, had pressed the brigand hard, but the excitement from which he was suffering on his child's account seemed to unnerve him.

This gave Barboni an advantage over his opponent, which he was not slow to seize.

Making a feint, as if he would threaten his heart, he lowered his sword, and lunged at his leg, recovering immediately, and again menacing the vital part.

Jack had parried the thrust in carte, but the rapid recovery, and the lunge in tierce were too much for him, and Barboni's sword struck him in the side, glancing along the ribs, inflicting a flesh wound of a very painful nature.

Wild with rage, and smarting with pain, Jack dashed boldly within the brigand's guard, and shortening his sword, plunged the point at his breast.

Thanks to the thick coat of chain mail which he always wore, the sword broke into small pieces, as if it had been shattered against a block of iron, or like a piece of glass shivered to atoms against a brick wall.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Barboni; "I have you now."

He raised his sword, and prepared to plunge it into his heart.

All at once Hunston, who formed a support for his back, gave way, and this sudden release caused him to stagger back some steps.

"In the fiend's name," cried Barboni, "what are you about?"

"I'm wounded," replied Hunston; "my one arm's pierced. Fly; I can fight no longer."

"Retreat," said Barboni; "I will guard the rear."

Hunston went rapidly to a secret pass, the existence of which was not known to the enemy, and, preceded by Bigamini, reached it.

Lord St. Clair and Clear-the-Track-Sam contested every inch of ground with the brigands, who fought with a skill, a nobleness, a gallantry which commended their admiration, in spite of their hatred for the man who, from his crimes, was to them a detestable monster.

When he neared the secret pass, the brigand exerted all his skill, and, with a sudden twist of his wrist, disarmed Lord St. Clair.

At the same time he dealt him a blow on the temple which brought him senseless to the ground.

Then he flung his sword at Sam, who, struck in the chest, rolled over and over in a very undignified manner.

Stooping down, the brigand seized the insensible body of Lord St. Clair in his arms.

Carrying him as if he had been a baby, he darted into the secret passage.

Hunston was awaiting him.

"Close the pass," he exclaimed.

"I can't. My arm is useless. Curse Harkaway for all eternity for making me a cripple," he said, savagely.

"Where is Bigamini?"

"Here, noble signor."

"Take this man, quick," said Barboni.

The burden was transferred to the spy, and the chief put his shoulder to a loose block of stone poised on a shelf.

It had been placed there for the purpose of blocking up the pass.

Very heavy and massive was it.

For a time it resisted all the efforts of Barboni to dislodge it.

Loud and fierce cries rang in his ears.

"After him! after him!" cried Jack, who had recovered from the momentary faintness caused by his wound. "The murderer of my child shall not escape."

Clear-the-Track-Sam picked himself up and ran to aid the noble spy.

"I guess he's a good one," he said.

But just as Sam, with Jack after him, reached the mouth of the pass, the brigand

a secret passage to the inclosure, Barboni made a prodigious effort.

The stone fell and blocked the entrance.

Jack and Sam stood blankly regarding this impediment to their further progress.

"Smokes!" said Clear-the-Track, scratching his head, "that's a settler. I reckon we're just a whisper too late."

Jack clambered up the side of the hollow to urge the commander of the soldiers to go in pursuit.

Seeing that the brigands were defeated, the officer sent his men in detachments to scour the country.

Jack returned to the hollow, which was now free from smoke, and was able to see the extent of the damage done.

The brigands had fought well and bravely; not one had attempted to escape, as five-and-twenty dead and wounded men testified.

As many as thirty soldiers had fallen, which showed that the resistance had been a desperate one.

Among the wounded Jack found the little coxswain, who was swearing terribly over the ball that had lodged in his leg.

Monday had fallen early in the fight, with a contusion on the head, caused by a blow with the butt end of a rifle.

Lord St. Clair was carried off by the retreating brigands.

Harvey had received some ugly knocks and bruises.

Mr. Mole, recovered from his fright, was strutting about like a hen that has just laid an egg, and was equally vain-glorious.

The body of the contessa, bathed in blood, was on the grass.

Jack, however, had no time to pay attention to all the melancholy objects that met his gaze.

He had but one thought in his mind, and that was to search for his child.

The tents were explored, and every part of the encampment searched without any result.

Young Jack was not to be found.

No one was there to tell him the boy had been carried off by the wolf, and he came to the conclusion that he was dead.

Barboni had sent him a pair of ears and a child's hand as a present, and he could not help thinking that his darling was no more.

Sitting down, regardless of the pain of his wound and the faintness caused by the loss of blood, Jack gave himself up to his grief.

He dared not go home to Emily and say that their boy was dead.

Such an announcement, in Emily's state of health, would most likely prostrate her to such an extent that she would never be able to recover from the shock.

"I'll hunt him to the death," said Jack. "It shall be life for life."

Being a brave man, and one not accustomed to go to sleep when there was anything to be done, Jack got up and tied a scarf tightly round his bleeding side, which, though stiff and painful, did not represent any internal injury.

Mr. Mole approached, and said:

"Safe and sound, I hope, Harkaway, after this fearful combat."

"The villain has escaped, sir, and I am in doubt about the fate of my child," replied Jack. "That's what worries me."

"We shall soon capture him. After this defeat the fellow must be on his beam ends, as we used to say when we were at sea," answered Mole.

"Yes," said Jack, smiling grimly, "we have cut his claws, but he alone knows the secret of my child, and in addition to this, he has carried off our ornament to the peerage."

"Nonsense!" said Mole. "Is Lord St. Clair a prisoner?"

"He was carried off before my face, and I couldn't stop it."

"Dear me! It was a pity I was so busy in another part of the field, or I certainly should not have allowed it. Really, Harkaway, I shall hunt the brigand, after all. You youngsters seem to let him have it all his own way."

Jack turned crossly away.

Those who had been wounded were carefully attended to, carts were procured, and they were conveyed back to Naples.

Clear-the-Track Sam, Jack, and Mr. Mole, remained encamped in the hills.

Barboni, Hunston, and Bigamini were the only ones left out of the brigand's large band to oppose them.

It was three to three.

An equal match.

They took possession of the empty encampment lately occupied by the brigands, and receiving a store of provisions, determined to keep the ground.

"If we can't render an account of Barboni and his one-armed lieutenant, it's a pity," said Clear-the-Track.

"I have no fear of not running him to earth, sooner or later," answered Jack. "But I am so cut up at the loss of my boy. I wouldn't have lost the little fellow for the world. He was such a beauty."

"That's a simple truth," remarked Mr. Mole. "And as his tutor, I ought to know his worth, and I unhesitatingly declare that the boy was a prodigy."

"I don't know what a prodigy—what did you say?" asked Sam.

"Prodigy, sir, is a term which"—

"Never mind what it is. I say the boy was a rock, a little stunner, and I never will believe he's dead. He's hidden away somewhere."

"I wish to goodness I could think so," replied Jack.

"You go to sleep on it, and you'll think better of it in the morning," replied the American.

"I'll go and nose about a bit with my rifle. The thundering thieves ain't far off, I'll bet a hat."

Clear-the-Track Sam shouldered the rifle.

"Barboni fought well," he observed.

"Yes. I'll give him credit for that," replied Mr. Mole.

"You, sir!" said Jack. "Why, you never were near him."

"I fought with him, Harkaway, for fifteen minutes by my watch, only you didn't see me in the fog."

"Ah, the fog was thick," said Sam, with a wink.

"No, no, Harkaway," continued Mr. Mole, "give me credit for what I do. Go to sleep, as our Yankee friend recommends, and I will have a quiet pipe and a pull out of my cask."

He unslung his cask, while Jack crept into a tent and threw himself on some blankets.

Sam started on an exploring expedition, and all was still.

The dead and wounded alike were gone.

All that remained to remind the observer of the bloody scene which had recently taken place were the cartridges lying about, the now useless rifles and pistols, a few articles of clothing, and the clotted blood, festering in the rays of the burning sun.

Mr. Mole soon fell into a happy state.

He had seated himself in a shady spot, and what with whisky and tobacco, he quickly dozed off.

He woke up with a start, fancying there was some one about the camp.

"This won't do," he muttered, rubbing his eyes.

Before him was a strange animal with his nose on the ground.

Looking again, he saw it was a wolf, who was engaged, in the congenial occupation of licking up the blood which crimsoned the ground.

"Hi! get out, you beast! Be off!" said Mr. Mole, clapping his hands.

The wolf gave a leap and was capably out of sight.

"Curious things, wolves," muttered Mr. Mole, applying himself once more to his flask.

There was an audible gurgle as the spirit went down his throat.

"Curious things, brigands," he continued. "Wonder what the next move will be. Very curious things, wolves—funny things, brigands"

—hic—bother this whisky, it's gone the wrong—hic—way."

A violent fit of coughing stopped the current of his remarks, and when he recovered himself he went to sleep again, murmuring:

"Curious things, brigands—hic—very curious things—hic—wolves—hic."

CHAPTER XXI.

TORO, THE GIANT.

BEATEN, but not conquered, the brigand chief retreated to the plain by passes only known to himself.

Hunston followed him in a dejected manner, for the defeat they had suffered and the destruction of the band, added to the suffering caused him by his wound, had caused his spirits to sink very low.

Lord St. Clair was given into Bigamini's charge, and the latter had bound the arms of his captive with a rope behind his back, keeping hold of one end of the rope to prevent him running away, and prodding him with the point of a sword as drovers goad oxen on the road to the market.

"Hold up there!" he would exclaim if the prisoner stumbled. "Gee up! now then, stupid, what are you at? I'll teach you the rule of three."

Each sentence would be accompanied by a prick, which the wretched young nobleman was unable to resent.

All that day they traveled, obtaining refreshments at laborers' cottages by the roadside.

For these, all were well able to pay, as each had a very large sum of money in gold, notes and jewels, fastened in an India-rubber belt, tied around the waist, under his other clothes.

The money was the result of successful brigandage.

Barboni had nearly twenty thousands pounds, Hunston ten, and Bigamini nearly two thousand.

The river was crossed by Barboni, who was too prudent a man to linger in the vicinity of his defeat.

Round the base of Mount Vesuvius the region, in parts, was very wild and desolate.

Here he had determined to seek an asylum for a time.

It was night when they came to the end of their journey, and Lord St. Clair was ready to sink to the earth with fatigue.

The others, being more hardy and accustomed to privation and exposure, did not feel the weariness that oppressed him, though they too were glad of a halt.

Stars innumerable studded the heavens, and the crescent moon shone on the fair scene.

Vineyards were all around, and the smiling country lay wrapt in a calm repose, which gave the beholder little idea of the volcanic dangers lurking beneath their feet.

At times fitful gleams of flames shot up from the crater.

Vesuvius had been very unquiet of late, and had given many symptoms of erupting, which, accompanied by shocks of earthquake, had alarmed the population of the surrounding country.

But they, accustomed to the manifestation, shrugged their shoulders, hoping that nothing more serious than usual would happen.

At the foot of the mountain was a house made of blocks of lava, half hidden by vines and climbing plants.

This was so easily perceptible to an ordinary observer, and so well known to Barboni and Hunston, that they had erected it as a refuge when in that part.

It was the custom of the brigands to make little resting-places of this sort in various localities to serve as asylums in case they were hunted about and driven:

In these rude huts or shanties, which were requested by the present, owing to their fear of the brigands, they kept a supply of potted and tinned meats, so that they were always sure of finding provisions.

In addition to this, they buried jars of wine

and spirits in the earth, marking the spot so as to know where to dig for them when wanted.

"Here we are," said Hunston.

"Time enough too," growled Barboni. "Bigamini."

"Si, signor," returned the spy.

"Fasten the prisoner to a tree and set about getting some supper. It is quite fourteen hours since I broke my fast."

"Same here," muttered Bigamini, as he proceeded to bind Lord St. Clair to the nearest tree.

Barboni approached the hut and drew back with a cry of surprise.

There was a light burning inside, and the sound of men's voices singing a rude chorus reached his ears.

"Diavolo!" he cried; "what is this?"

He approached the door and fearlessly flung it back, expecting to find a party of peasants carousing.

But his surprise was great when he discovered half-a-dozen armed men, who sprang to their feet with fierce oaths at beholding the intruder.

Pistols were leveled at his breast, and his retreat was cut off.

Calm and majestic as usual in the midst of danger, he uttered his famous cry:

"Vi saluta Barboni!"

At the sound of that magic name, the men lowered their weapons, and their leader stepped forward.

He was a huge giant of a man, standing nearly eight feet high and stout in proportion.

In his right hand he held a large club, made out of the root of a tree, weighing half a hundred pounds.

He seemed to be a veritable Ormuz, or wild man of the woods.

His hair was long, shaggy as a goat's, and unkempt. Over his shoulders he wore a sheep-skin, and a rough leather belt contained pistols and daggers.

"Who are you?" demanded Barboni.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the giant, whirling the club round his head as a top. "I am a very big man, a little like the giant of Despayres. I am a friend of the great Brigid."

"I am a friend, and you are in my house," replied Barboni.

"So we are all friends, for that matter; but why you should call this your house, I cannot tell."

"I think so."

"So, then, Virgilio, can you be the great Brigid?"

"Vi saluta Barboni" was the calm reply.

"If you are Barboni, I'll make you heartily welcome, for I am trusting in your footsteps. My name is Toro."

"I have heard of you," replied Barboni; "you are the new brigand who has lately established himself at the base of Mount Vesuvius."

"The same."

"Well, then, your house?"

The giant held out his enormous palm, which Barboni shook heartily.

"Come in and welcome," said Toro. "I little thought I should have the honor of entertaining so distinguished a brigand."

"In his own house, then," said Barboni.

"Per Baccho, if it is your house, it is a pity you did not furnish it better," replied the giant.

"What fault have you to find with it?" asked Barboni.

"There are neither chairs, tables, or drinkables."

"I am sorry you do not know where to find them. Presently I will supply your wants. I am hunted and driven."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Toro. "I have been driven from my house this morning. I am a fugitive, tired and wounded. If you will, I will stay with you. If not, I am in no position to enforce my demands, and will go elsewhere."

"Amico mio," said Toro, "you shall do no such thing. What I have is yours; my hand

is small; I have as yet but five followers, but they shall shed the last drop of their blood for you. Eh, my lads?"

A clapping of hands followed, and a general murmur of assent arose from all the brigands assembled.

Barboni bowed his acknowledgements.

"How many men have you left?" asked Toro.

"My lieutenant and a spy, who has charge of a prisoner, an Englishman."

Deep groans were heard.

"I hate the English," said Toro. "They have hunted you down, which is what our own countrymen never would have done, and it is a burning shame to see a splendid brigand like yourself in disgrace."

"Not in disgrace," replied Barboni, proudly. "I have been beaten by numbers, owing to a surprise, but we made a good stand, and I believe that for each of my men who fell, the enemy lost double."

"Pardon me," said the giant, "I made use of a wrong term."

"Let us have meat and drink," replied Barboni, "and you shall do what you like with the English prisoner."

"Viva Barboni! viva, viva!" cried the brigands.

Hunston had been standing at the entrance to the hut, with his hand upon his pistol, ready for any emergency.

He was faint and weak from loss of blood, and entering the hut, sat down among the brigands, who made room for him.

"Bigamini," said Barboni, in a loud voice, "dig up the wine and spirits; you know where they are hidden."

While the spy was engaged in this congenial occupation, the chief rolled away a block of lava, and disclosed to view a choice assortment of meats, in tins, which were eagerly perused upon by Toro and his men.

After a good meal, which washed down by copious draughts of wine, the brigands set a watch and retired to rest, throwing themselves down on the ground in their long cloaks, and sleeping as soundly as if they had been in bed.

Barboni, Hunston and Bigamini were thoroughly worn out.

As for Lord St. Clair, he was utterly forgotten.

It was enough for the brigands that he was secured, and they cared little or nothing for his comfort.

He could not sleep in the uncomfortable position they had placed him, and longed ardently for the approach of his friends, whom he hoped were coming in search of him.

Vain hope.

Willingly would Harkaway have followed on Barboni's track, but he had not the slightest idea which way he had gone, while Clear-the-Track Sam was hunting about the mountains, where Barboni had left no traces behind him.

During the night Vesuvius became very active.

Great clouds of ashes and stones were thrown up, the earth quaked, and rumbling noises like distant thunder warned all those in the vicinity that an eruption on a large scale was imminent.

Lord St. Clair could not help admiring the magnificent spectacle presented by the burning mountain, which stood out clearly against the bright sky.

At length his head fell wearily on his shoulder, and his eyes closed.

He thought of home, and of his proud position, his prospects in life, all blighted by a miserable brigand.

But for this he would not have cared to avenge the death of his cousin.

Carden's dying request was that he should come over to Naples and stay Barboni.

He was a prisoner, and as yet, poor Carden was unavenged.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS.

TOWARDS daybreak small streams of burning lava descended the sides of the mountain.

These gradually increased in size and strength, until they became formidable.

The sentinels saw the streaming lava coming towards them.

It was time to raise the alarm.

Toro was first roused, and the others soon followed them from the hut to gaze upon the fiery mountain, down whose sides was pouring the insidious lava.

The crater was in full blast, and the sight was grand in the extreme.

Barboni gazed at it with his arms folded.

"We must move from this spot," he exclaimed.

"What!" replied Toro. "Are you afraid of a little lava? Why, I have seen it worse than this, and ascended to the top without danger."

"Nay," said Barboni, "'tis not that; but the spectacle always attracts a number of people from Naples, and we shall have those accursed English down upon us."

"Ah, that is true, and it reminds me of our prisoner. What do you say—shall we finish him off before we leave the hut?"

"As you please," returned Barboni, carelessly.

"Who is he?"

"I have not questioned him."

"But you speak the heretic's language. Question him now," said Toro.

Barboni ordered Bigamini to bring Lord St. Clair before him, which he immediately did.

The young nobleman was unabashed, and returned the stare of his enemies boldly.

"Who are you?" asked Barboni.

"A peer of England," was the answer.

"Your name?"

"Lord St. Clair."

"What was your object in attacking me, when I had done you no harm?"

"I wished to avenge the murder, by you, of my cousin—Mr. Carden—and I am sorry I did not succeed."

"So am I, for your sake," sneered Barboni.

"Your cousin bearded me once too often, and has gone to—well, we will say Paradise: and you will very shortly follow him."

Turning to Toro, he added:

"Do what you like with the English hound."

Throw him into the lava, and let him boil in it," said Toro, whose savage nature exulted in such a ferocious sentence.

In spite of his natural courage, Lord St. Clair trembled when he heard his doom.

The lava was flowing almost at their feet in a liquid, hissing, smoking, boiling stream.

It was an awful fate.

Bigamini seized him by the arm, saying:

"Come on, you've had your coffee. Make room for the next gentleman."

Turning to Barboni, St. Clair said:

"Do you call yourself a man, and will you surrender this crime?"

"Your life was forfeited when you attacked me," answered Barboni. "I did not take myself your enemy. It was your act. What harm had I done you personally, that you should thirst for my blood?"

"You killed my cousin Carden."

"In fair fight. He attacked me. True, I am a brigand, but what harm had I done to any of these Englishmen?"

"To the lava! to the lava!" cried the brigands, fiercely.

"Have you no heart?" asked St. Clair.

"My heart is hard as iron," replied Barboni.

"Spare my life. You can have any money you wish for as ransom."

"I am no longer to spare lives. What pity would you have had upon me, if your cousin had been successful and you had been spared? It would have been the end of the world for me?"

The brigands were growing impatient at this conversation.

Again their voices rang out on the morning

"To the lava! to the lava!"

"Very well," replied Lord St. Clair. "You shall see that I know how to die."

"Take him away," was Barboni's only remark.

Bigamini pushed him along, until the edge of the stream was reached, when he gave him a kick which sent him on his hands and knees into the flood.

The agony was so great that his lordship burst his bonds.

He uttered an awful cry, and taking up the burning lava in his hands, he cast it at Barboni.

It was now the brigand's turn to shout out.

"Shoot him!" he said; "shoot him! He has blinded me."

"Ha!" cried Lord St. Clair; "Carden is avenged. Thank God for that one mercy."

The next moment the rifles rattled as they were raised to the shoulders.

A report was heard, and the unfortunate young nobleman fell riddled with balls into the liquid fire which enveloped him.

He was dead.

Barboni was suffering the most acute agony, for the lava had entered his eyes and so burnt the pupils that his sight was gone forever.

"Blind—blind!" he cried, clutching at the air with his extended hands.

The brigands shrank back, appalled at this sudden catastrophe.

"Blind—blind!" was all that the once famous and dreaded chief could say.

It was a terrible retribution for all his crimes, as to be blind is a living death, for the blind man is dependent upon others; he can no longer help himself.

He cannot see the pleasant faces of his friends, nor the frowning brows of his foes.

Neither can he behold the smiling country; all is a desolate blank to him, from which he cannot emerge until he reaches the other side of the grave.

Running about frantically, he continued to exclaim in accents of terrible lamentation:

"Blind, blind! Oh, God, I am blind!"

To a man of his habits and life, blindness was the most awful punishment which could have befallen him.

Rather would he that death had come to him at once.

Toro and his men were bewildered at what had happened, so much so that they could scarcely believe it was true.

Hunston took the hand of his chief and led him into the hut, where he applied oil to his eyes.

All Barboni could utter was, in a moaning voice:

"I have lost my sight! Blind! blind!"

"You will be better soon, I hope," replied Hunston. "In the meantime you are among friends."

"I would rather die than live like this. Oh, my punishment is more than I can bear. Promise me you will not leave me, Hunston, until I know the worst."

"I promise," said Hunston.

"You must get a skillful doctor to come and look at me. Say I am a poor peasant who has met with an accident, but who has a few ducats to pay him with. If there is no hope I will die. Oh, Holy Virgin, how my eyeballs burn."

Toro and his men went out to stop travelers, expecting a rich harvest, as many people came out from Naples to look at the burning mountain.

Hunston went in search of a doctor, not wishing to make the journey, because he was not a doctor, and he was required dressing.

Barboni, the once haughty chief, was sadly reduced, for he was as helpless as a child.

He sat in the corner of the hut, howling his fate, and grinding his teeth as the anguish caused by his eyes fired deep agonies from him.

The spy remained as his servant, but his master had died out.

He felt a sort of contempt for this blind man, who was so far dependent upon other as to ask for a drink of water.

"Come here," exclaimed Barboni; "I want to talk to you."

"Do you?" answered Bigamini, insolently; "then you will have to wait."

"Ha!" roared Barboni, with his old impetuosity, "I will put a bullet through your rascally carcass if you dare to be insolent to me."

"Fire away; you can't see to hit me."

With trembling hands the brigand seized a pistol which was stuck in his belt, and discharged it in the direction from which the spy's voice had proceeded.

But Bigamini had quickly removed his position, and glided stealthily up to his master, knocked the pistol out of his hand, and struck him with his open hand on the cheek.

"Take that," he said. "If I am a miserable Bigamini, I am not going to stand your foolishness."

"Santo Dio!" cried Barboni. "Has it come to this? Have I really fallen so low? Is my depth of degradation, shame and helplessness such that I am to brook blows and insults from a contemptible worm, who a short time back trembled at my nod?"

"You'll have to put up with a good deal more than that if you sauce me," answered Bigamini.

"I will complain to Toro of you; he is noble and generous, and will have you punished."

"Toro's not such a fool as to listen to a helpless animal like you," sneered Bigamini. "You're not the man you used to be. What's the good of you since Lord St. Clair blinded you?"

"Ah, Heaven! I am indeed fallen, since this fellow mocks and gibes at me thus."

"Take it easy and be civil, or I'll get a stick and keep you quiet," continued Bigamini, who, like all little cowards, was always a bully when he got a chance.

"Well, well," said Barboni, controlling himself with an effort, "I will try to be humble, since it is your wish, and I am as you say powerless. Give me some wine and water, good Bigamini."

"That's civil; I don't mind waiting on you, when you speak sensibly, like that. Only don't you think you're going to ride over me now. Things is altered, I tell you; I'm master now."

Barboni groaned in agony of spirit, but made no further remark, taking the drink silently.

There he sat for hours.

Retribution, which always does the deeds of evil-doers, had been overtaking him with giant strides of late.

In the afternoon Bigamini got restless.

"I shall go out for a bit," he said to himself.

"That groaning fool gives me the hump."

Quitting the hut, he soon reached the road, along which several people were walking, attracted from Naples and the surrounding villages by the magnificent spectacle of Vesuvius in eruption.

He had not gone far before something fell heavily on his head, knocking his hat over his eyes, and before he could extricate himself, his hand were bound behind his back.

"What the deuce are you up to?" he exclaimed, in a rage. "Drop it, whoever you are! Turn it up, I say, and look sharp."

"I'll drop you, if you're not quiet," replied a voice which made him tremble. "Oh, to think that I should have the luck to find you again, all through taking a walk to look at Vesuvius a-burnin' just like a mill-shaft chimney afore."

"Sarah Ann," said Bigamini, "I've been a-looking for you ever since our last pleasant meeting."

"Oh, you story!" answered the woman, for it was his wife who had caught him; "you never did no such thing. You've been along of brigands, and there's a reward out for you."

"You won't give me up, Sarah Ann?"

"That's what I shall do. I'll see you hang-

ing on the scaffold, and then I'll go home and forget I ever knew such a 'orrid wretch as you."

"Lift up my hat, sweetest of thy sect, that I may gaze upon your lovely countenance once more. Oh, angelic being, what bliss is mine to meet my darling Sarah Ann once more?" exclaimed Bigamini, in his most wheedling and dflowery tone.

"Your a 'umbug—that's what you are!" said Mrs. Smiffins, complying, however, with his request.

"I'm a happy Smiffins, once more," he continued. "This is more than I deserve. I've got money, my dear, and I'll go home with you to enjoy it. All shall be yours. Every lire is for you."

"You don't get over me," answered Mrs. Smiffins, with a shake of the head. "I know I'm a young girl from the country, but you don't get over me." I've got you, and I'll keep you. Come along of me, and be handed over to the first police we see."

"If it must be so, it must, hard-hearted fair. But ere we go, grant one request."

"Well, what is it? No tricks, now."

"My money is buried close by here. I should like you to have it."

"I don't mind that. It ain't likely to be of any use to you, so I may as well take it to start me in business when you are gone."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. SMIFFINS MAKES TOO SURE.

"Come on, Sarey Ann. I will make atonement for the past," said Bigamini. "Let me lead the van."

"Is it far?"

"Up this rocky path. I go first, and you can follow. Oh, Sarey Ann, ain't you hard-hearted?"

He began to whimper, and the tears fell from his eyes, but his wife paid no attention to him.

She knew him too well by this time to put any faith in his tears, but kept her eye fixed upon him, fearful lest he should play her some trick and get away, as he had often done before.

Little Bigamini was as slippery as an eel, and as difficult to hold, as all had found out who had had anything to do with him.

Bigamini took his wife some distance up the side of Vesuvius, where there was no danger from the streams of molten lava.

Having gained the top of a small plateau, fringed with stunted shrubs and trees, he paused.

Below the edge of the plateau was a fall of over thirty feet.

Pretending to search at the foot of a tree, he uttered a cry of alarm and despair.

"What is the matter?" asked his wife.

"Oh, Sarah Ann," he exclaimed, "some brigand's been and dug up all my money!"

"Is it gone?"

"Every ducat. I have been watched and robbed."

"I wish to goodness," said Mrs. Smiffins, "that you hadn't brought me up this hill on a wild-goose chase. I've trodden on stones and such like till my feet ache."

"It's as bad for me," replied Bigamini.

"What does that matter. I'm going to give you up to the police as a brigand, and then I shall go home—but not till I see you executed."

"Sarah Ann, do you want to get rid of me?" inquired Bigamini, gravely.

"Haven't you wanted to get rid of me this ever so long?" she inquired.

"Ah, I see how it is. You wish to marry the snob who lived next door to us in the Lower Marsh, Lambeth."

"He's a respectable shoemaker, and I don't know but we shan't make a match of it."

"Why didn't you commit bigamy, as I did?"

"Because I'm not such a fool, and I ain't as bad as you are. If it hadn't been for your treatment of me, I shouldn't have thought of the shoemaker."

"Look here, Sarah Ann," said Bigamini, "I know I've behaved cruel to you, but it ain't

worth while to take the trouble to have me executed."

"Why not?"

"Do it yourself."

"How?" asked Mrs. Smiffins, rather puzzled to understand his meaning.

"I'll stand on the edge of this plateau," said Bigamini. "My hands are tied and I can't help myself."

"Well?"

"You come and shove behind, over I go—break my precious neck. You go home and marry the shoemaker in the Lower Marsh, and there's an end of it."

"It isn't a bad idea, not by any means," remarked Mrs. Smiffins reflectively.

"Are you on?"

"Of course I ain't got no love for you now, only hatred and despal," said Mrs. Smiffins.

"I know that. Oh, ain't I just a miserable Bigamini?—that's all. But it serves me jolly well right."

"You ought to have gone straight with me."

"Very true. It's too late now, isn't it?"

Mrs. Smiffins shook her head gravely to intimate that it was, and that she would have nothing more to do with him on any terms whatever.

"Wipe away that tear, Sarah Ann," said Bigamini.

"Where?"

"In my right eye. I can't help a-thinking of what has been."

Mrs. Smiffins said:

"Stand! You couldn't shed a tear if you tried to. It's all your 'nubbing'."

"Very well; a 'ard 'art will have its punishment. Shove away a good 'un," replied Bigamini, walking to the edge of the cliff.

"Are you ready?" asked his wife.

"Wait a minute. I want to say a prayer."

"Look sharp. I'm coming when I've counted twelve."

Bigamini turned his head round and watched her as she said:

"One, two, three, etc.," and his twinkling little eyes watched her every movement.

"Eleven: make haste!" she exclaimed.

"I've done," he answered.

"I'm a-comin'! Twelve. Stand well over."

"Right. Lord ha' mussy," said Bigamini.

His wife ran at him with her arms outstretched, fully intending to pitch him over the edge of the rock.

As she approached her pace quickened.

Just as she was prepared to touch him, he stepped nimbly on one side, and missing her aim, she was unable to stop herself, and tumbled over instead of her husband.

The branch of a tree, which projected over the precipice, caught her clothes, and she hung by it, dangling in the air, kicking her legs frantically, and screaming as if she thought she would save her life by making as much noise as possible.

Bigamini grinned.

He looked down at his struggling, screaming, panting better-half, and his eyes twinkled again like lightning.

"Save me, save me!" said Mrs. Smiffins.

"You didn't do it that time, my dear," he replied.

"Save me!"

"I can't, though much I wish, for you've tied my hands," said Bigamini, in a painful tone.

"Wretch, you did it on purpose."

"Of course I did my best. I'm quite as anxious to get rid of you as you are of me, and I could do nothing to let you have the best of it. How do you feel, my dear?"

"Brute, help me up. I'd give it you then."

"Can't, my dear. I can't. That branch feel secure? You're a good one, you know."

In fact the tree began to creak and shake, and there seemed every prospect of the worthy Mrs. Smiffins going down with a bang.

"The branch will break!" she exclaimed.

"That's just my opinion," replied Bigamini, coolly.

"Master, will you see me down without stretching out a hand to save me?"

"How can I help it? Didn't you tie my hands?"

"Save me! save me!"

"I can't, my dear, though much I wish, for you have tied my hands," sang Bigamini.

Though terribly frightened, Mrs. Smiffins' spirit was not subdued.

"I wish I had you under my feet, you contemptible worm," she said.

"I don't, my dear."

"Shouldn't I like to maul you?"

"You'll never have the chance again, my love. I shall marry my third when you're gone."

"Oh, you wretch!"

"Make haste, my pet. I want to see the last of you. Drop down and get smashed, will you, just to oblige yours, affectionately, a once happy Smiffins."

"I wonder fire doesn't come out of the mountains and burn you up, you aggravating thing," said his wife.

"Sarah Ann," exclaimed Bigamini, "death's a pleasant and a consoling fact. I never thought as I could look upon death with a hum-moved hey, but I do to-day. Don't be much longer over it, my sweet one, or"—

He paused and extended his leg.

"What?" asked Mrs. Smiffins, nervously.

"I shall have to kick this blooming tree, and shake you off, like a ripe happle in a gale of wind."

"Oh, don't, don't!" cried the poor woman. "I'm safe as long as the bough don't break."

"I want to see you drop. Oh! Sarah Ann, I'm sorry for you."

"A fat lot you're sorrow's worth," she answered.

"Jumping Moses!" said Bigamini. "I can't stand this much longer. Ain't you a-going to die?"

He advanced to the edge of the plateau, and took a survey of the situation.

This convinced him that his wife couldn't get up.

She must either hang there or fall down by the breaking of the branch or the giving way of her clothes.

"Ta, ta, old girl," he added. "I shall leave you to it."

"Don't go like that," answered Mrs. Bigamini. "If you'll set me free I'll be an altered woman."

"Not you, Sarah Ann," replied Bigamini, with an incredulous shake of the head.

"I will, indeed. Listen here. I'll never nag you no more."

"It ain't in you not to do it, Sarah Ann."

He moved away a little.

"Hear me," she cried, eagerly. "I swear I'll be good and obedient, and never say nothing. No, not if you're ever so aggravating."

"Suppose I marry a third?"

"I'll let you. The Turks have more than one wife, and so have the Mormons. Let me up, there's a good fellow, and you shall keep a ladder if you like."

"It ain't good enough, Sarah Ann."

"By the memory of the past, I request you. Don't, oh, don't leave me here!"

"It was your own doing, my popsy-wopsy, now that's that," said Bigamini.

"Now, if I save me, and I'll be to you all things as I will be to her husband."

"You've only been hanging about half an hour, my dear, and it's worked a wonderful change in you."

"It has," she said.

"Now I shall leave you till to-morrow morning. Don't halloo so. Wait till you've done a night's hanging on that tree. If the bough don't break, it will make you a regular stunner. A perfect stunner, I may say, so when, my dear, will you let me down?"

In vain Mrs. Smiffins protested, and begged, and implored. Her remarks and supplications with the most piercing shrieks.

Bigamini turned coolly on his heel, and began to make his way cautiously down the side of the mountain.

His hands were still bound behind his back, and it would have been a serious matter if he

had stepped upon a loose stone and missed his footing, for he would have rolled over until he reached the bottom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPY BETRAYS HIS MASTER.

In spite of his care and watchfulness, Bigamini slipped over a piece of lava, and fell heavily forward.

Instinctively he stretched out his hands to save his face, and so great was the effort he made that the cord with which his wife had bound him snapped asunder.

He was free.

A few scratches and bruises were all he received from his fall, and he considered them cheaply purchased at the price of his liberty and freedom of action again.

Reaching the main road once more, he walked slowly along until he came to a small cottage, in which lived an old peasant woman, who got her living by selling wines and spirits.

On the shutter was posted a police notice.

This Bigamini stopped to read, and saw that the *affiche* was to this effect:

"Five thousand ducats reward, together with a free pardon to anyone who will give information leading to the capture of the well-known brigand chief,

'BARBONI.

"Information to be given to the chief officer of police at Naples.

"By order.

"(Signed) CHALDINI."

Bigamini pondered over this for a short time, and his villainous little eyes twinkled as if some wicked idea had come into his fertile brain.

Knocking at the door, he exclaimed:

"Open, mother, and don't keep a customer out in the heat, till he's as baked as a parched pea."

The old woman, who had dozed off while doing a little knitting to eke out her slender income, gave him admittance.

"A bottle of wine for a gentleman," continued Bigamini.

She placed before him the wine of the country, which he paid for and proceeded to drink leisurely.

"Are you from the city, master?" asked the old crone.

"Yes," replied Bigamini.

"What is the news, may I ask?"

"No news that I know of."

"Have they caught Barboni yet?"

"Not yet, though I think they will soon," said Bigamini, with a start.

"I hope not. Just think! the poor will miss him: he was ever good to the poor."

"Rubbish. It was his lieutenant, Signor Bigamini, you mean," said the spy.

"I have not heard of him," answered the crone. "But I mind me well a year back, that Barboni liked me, with his men, and gave me two good pieces, telling me to keep the change. I'm sorry to hear of his misfortunes."

"What do they say, mother?"

"I had a police officer here this morning to eat his sausage and take his glass. He told me that Barboni's band was broken up and all were killed but the brigand chief, his lieutenant, and a spy."

"That's me," muttered Bigamini.

"The old woman's quick ears caught the remark and she tried to hastily close the door of the cupboard.

"What have you got in there, granny?" asked Bigamini.

"Nothing, signor; 'tis the dearest treacle in me," replied the crone, with evident uneasiness.

"I should think you have done well in this place, granny."

"No, indeed, signor. My custom is small."

"But you've been here some time; you save and don't spend much. If people save and don't spend, they grow rich. How much

money have you got in that old cracked china tea-pot I saw."

"None at all, good signor. I am very poor, so poor that I don't taste meat from year's end to year's end."

"You're a miser. I've heard of you before," said Bigamini, getting up and advancing to the cupboard.

The crone placed herself resolutely in his way.

"Stand back," she said. "I can see what you are now."

"What am I?" he asked, impudently.

"One of Barboni's band, the spy, I think; you look too mean to be a lieutenant. Stand back, I say; you shall not rob me. I have a dagger, and will defend my money with my life."

Bigamini laughed scornfully.

"Ho, ho!" he cried, "so you have money, mother, have you? That is all right; the cat slipped out of the bag, didn't it?"

Her withered arm was outstretched, and it trembled violently as she held up the rusty dagger, with which she hoped to prevent herself from being robbed.

"Get out of the way. I want your mopuses," said Bigamini, given her a rude push.

He spoke in English.

"Ha," replied the woman, "you are no true brigand. An Italian would not harm a poor creature like me. You are a foreign hireling, some accursed heretic. Back, spawn of Satan! I spit on thee."

"The old gal's in her tantrums. I shall have to settle her," said Bigamini.

He drew his knife, and keeping out of the reach of her antiquated dagger, which, wielded by such a feeble, palsied hand, could not have done him much harm, cast the weapon at her.

This was a favorite trick of his, and he was an adept at it.

Often in his idle moments he had practiced pitching the knife at a plank of wood.

The skill consisted in so throwing it that you could hit a certain marked spot, and make the knife stick upright in it.

Before casting it, he had calculated to a nicety the position of the old woman's heart.

Sh-sh-sh flew the knife through the air, striking the aged victim with a dull thud.

"I'll be a mark on you, my lady," he said, between his clenched teeth.

The dagger fell from her hand, she pressed the other to her side, and, with a groan, fell heavily to the floor, which was soon ensanguined with her slowly flowing blood.

"Dead as mutton," said Bigamini, stooping down, and repossessing himself of his knife. "It's a case of Cooper's ducks with her."

Springing the body with his foot, he approached the cupboard, which he carefully ransacked.

As he expected, the old teapot was the receptacle of gold and notes to the amount of nearly two hundred and fifty pounds in our money.

Unfastening his treasure-belt, he added this sum to his already large store, and chuckled greedily as he did so.

Then he refreshed himself with some more wine, and quitting the cottage, walked on slowly to Naples, with as much unconcern as if nothing had happened.

When he reached the city it was evening.

He went at once and fearlessly to Harkaway's house; the door, as was usual in that hot place, was open, and he made his way to Monday's room.

The black was wiping some glasses, and looked up in surprise at seeing the spy.

"Mr. Bigamini," he cried.

"At your service, sir. I hope I see you well, Mr. Monday," replied Bigamini.

"What um come here for? Got um child?"

"Unfortunately I have not, but I have little doubt I shall be able to put you on the track of the missing kid."

"You know um life not safe," said Monday. "We know all about you now, and me not let you go. You um spy of Barboni, and you got to bring him."

"I don't know so much about that," replied Bigamini. "Give me some wine, and I'll talk to you."

"Well," said Monday, "um got a good check."

"So they say."

Monday gave him a tumbler of wine, which he drank with great gusto.

"How's Mr. Harkaway, and all the rest of them?" he asked.

"Mast' Jack very bad, and so Miss Emily, too. They fret for um child. Mist' Mole at home. Mist' Clear-the-Track, Mist' Coxswain and Mist' Harvey all gone after um brigand to rescue Lord St. Clair."

"He's past praying for," said Bigamini.

"What, another of um gone?"

"Yes; his lordship's gone to glory, in kingdom come."

"Where um Barboni?"

"That's telling," replied Bigamini, putting his finger knowingly on one side of his nose.

"I can't afford to let on for nothing."

"You silly fellow, come here," said Monday.

"Why?"

"Have to put you in prison, then you go hang, sare—that why."

"My faithful black," said Bigamini, "you're a child. Where's your sense?"

"Um got sense enough."

"No, you haven't. I wouldn't find you."

"What?"

"I wouldn't have you at a gift, and you'd be dear at nothing."

"Stop um chaff," said Monday. "Um laugh t'other side of um face soon."

"No I shan't. Do you think I'm such an infant to come here if I didn't know it was all right."

"Can't see it myself."

"Can I see your master?"

"Mast' Jack up stairs; he mopes in um arm-chair. And Miss Emily keep her bed, with Missy Hilda and Missy Lily to nurse her."

"Take me up stairs. Your society is very agreeable, but x. faithful and unintelligent blackskin, it is possible to have too much of a good thing."

Monday looked angrily at him.

"Come along," he replied. "Um grin through um prison bars soon."

He led the way up stairs, keeping his eye carefully fixed on the spy all the while.

At the door of the drawing-room he paused and knocked.

"Come in," said Jack.

He started up when he saw Bigamini.

"You here?" he exclaimed. "How did this happen?"

"Good-day, Mr. Harkaway—hope I see you, sir," answered Bigamini.

"Do you know your life is forfeited?" said Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"You are in the proscribed list, and you can hope for no mercy from me, unless you have come to restore my child, and then, perhaps, I could use my influence to get your sentence commuted from death to penal servitude for life."

"Thank you," replied Bigamini, dryly. "I don't want your help at present, Mr. Harkaway."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you ever read in the Bible of a certain party called Judas, sir?"

"Judas? Yes. He betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver."

"That's what I'm going to do, though I mean to have much more than thirty pieces."

"Judas afterward killed himself."

"That's what I'm not going to do," replied Bigamini, with a chuckle. "You have seen the bills of reward, sir, for the capture of Barboni?"

"Yes. Oh, I see what you mean now," said Jack. "You mean to betray Barboni's hiding-place, claiming the reward and the free pardon."

"Exactly."

"Well, I can't say I admire you for your

treachery, though I am glad we shall have the scoundrel in our power. Where is he?"

"That I can only tell to the chief of the police, begging your pardon, Mr. Harkaway."

"Is Harkaway with him?"

"Yes, though he can't see him."

"How is that?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Barboni is blind, sir."

"Blind?"

"Yes, as blind as a bat, and this is how it happened. He sentenced Lord St. Clair to death, and he was thrown into the boiling lava; but before he died, he threw the lava at Barboni, and it went into his eyes, blinding him."

"Horrible! Poor St. Clair! Still he avenged Carden," said Jack.

"I can't tell you much about your child, sir," continued Bigamini.

"Is he not dead?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Will you stand my friend, sir, if I tell you all I know?"

"Of course I gladly will."

"You remembered the wolf in the sybil's cave, sir?"

"Yes."

"When the witch was mur—ahem! that is when she died, the wolf followed us to our camp, and the morning of the attack the beast ran away with the child in his mouth, and the ears and hands we sent were cut off another child, so that we didn't hurt yours."

"Hurrah!" cried Jack; "he lives—he lives! Thank God for this!"

Springing from his chair, he rushed up stairs to communicate the good news to Emily.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GOOD NEWS

EMILY was lying in bed, very pale and ill. Hilda was sitting by her side, reading to her, while Lily was fanning her warm face.

Suddenly Jack sprang into the room.

"Hurry down, I've got good news for you," he said. "Are you strong enough to bear it?"

She turned her lustrous eyes anxiously upon him.

"Is it about our—our child?" she asked.

"Yes; he is not dead."

"Thank heaven! But he is mutilated. We saw—at least you saw the ears and hand that cruel brigand cut off."

"That was a trick to work upon our feelings. Another child was mutilated, and ours is safe."

"How do you know this?" demanded Emily.

Jack related what Bigamini had told him.

"Heaven is good to us. But can we believe it?" she said.

"I think so. Bigamini has nothing to gain by inventing such a story, and he has come for the express purpose of betraying his master."

"Will not the savage wolf kill him?"

"I have heard of animals taking a fancy to children, and this one was not a wild one, you must remember. We must hope for the best."

Emily sat up in her bed, and her tears fell fast.

They were tears of joy.

"I shall soon get better now, Jack, dear," she said. "Oh, I am so delighted. Do go and look at once for the boy."

"I will send Monday to the mountains."

"Why not go yourself?" she asked reproachfully.

"I must capture Barboni myself. You know I have sworn to do so. It has been the ambition of my life," answered Jack.

"Oh, when will all these dangers be over?" she asked, with a sigh.

"Soon, I hope, darling. Kiss me, and rescue yourself," answered Jack.

Emily embraced him tenderly.

"You have made me so happy," she said; "happier than I ever thought I would be again in this world. I will pray that the end of all our troubles may be drawing near."

Hilda came up to Jack.

"This is great news," she exclaimed.

"Is it not?" asked Jack.
 "You are going after her?"
 "Yes."

"Capture him at all hazards. You have fortune with you now. Bring him to Naples."
 "I will—dead or alive."

"That is right. This man must die before we know any more."

"He will not be able to fight much, for, in doing Lord St. Clair killed him."

"Is poor St. Clair dead?" asked Hilda.
 "The victim to your fatal resolve, to exterminate these brigands."

"It can't be helped, my dear Mrs. Harvey," answered Jack. "When I put my foot down and say a thing must be done, I mean it, and done it generally is, somehow or other."

"Well, go on your errand. You have my blessing," replied Hilda.

He went away, leaving the ladies much more cheerful than they had been before.

They were all anxious to get back to England.

It was the wish of their hearts to see their father and mother, and the relief of the constant anxiety and worries amidst which they had lived for some time past.

Lily, indeed, wanted to them.

She said that Lord St. Clair was a very good man, and that she had been very much interested in his story. She was going to write a book about him, and she was going to write a book about him, and she was going to write a book about him.

The ladies were all very much interested in the story of the brigands, and they were all very much interested in the story of the brigands.

They decided to go to the brigands, and they decided to go to the brigands. They decided to go to the brigands, and they decided to go to the brigands.

At last, of course, having that the two dead had taken possession of the property, and it was not to be given up without a struggle.

Jack and Hilda's confidence would be very much shaken.

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"Ha! does the slave dare to laugh at me? Let him die the death," cried Mole.

Raising the broom, he ran furiously at the little tailor, and catching him in the stomach, rolled him over on the carpet.

"Thus perish all the victims of my just indignation," said Mr. Mole, grandly.

"Oh, Lord, oh! he's hit me in the wind and lost my breath," exclaimed Bigamini, getting up and rubbing his stomach.

"What! is the wretch still alive? By the sun, moon and stars, by the octopus in the Brighton aquarium, and by the living jingo, I'll have his vital spark," exclaimed Mole.

He brandished his broom and began to beat the spy.

"Die, dog, die!" he roared.

"I say," said Mr. Mole, protecting his head with his arms as well as he could, "this won't do. Mr. Harkaway, stop him. He's a raving maniac; stop him, sir."

Jack was laughing too much to be able to interfere.

The spy at last got out of the reach of the broom, and made a side dash at Mole.

"That the charge out of that Alexander the Great," he said, "he struck him on the nose. Mr. Mole went to grass heavily and groaned."

"That's all water in all his veins," he murmured; "this fell Caesar, struck down by the dagger of the assassin. Fallen, fallen, fallen from my high estate, as Dryden sings. Alas! to all my greatness, as the swan of Avon sings."

"Put me up!" exclaimed Bigamini. "He's a caution. Is he often like this? Because you ought to keep him locked up, Mr. Harkaway."

"I will have him cared for. It is the effect of drink," replied Jack. "Send for a doctor."

"Doctors are liars. Who can minister to a mind diseased? I pause for a reply."

"Monday," whispered Jack, "you must put Mr. Mole in a room by himself. Lock him in with bread and water till I come back, or he will do some one a mischief."

"You are a spiteful man."

"It is what my old D. T., or d. Trum, told me, that a man's mind is a result of excessive drinking."

"Why not mind um meself, sare?"

I want you to go to the mountains at once, to look for my child, whom you have heard Bigamini say the wolf ran away with."

"Um, oh, has a shot, sar," replied Monday.

"I think," said Bigamini, "that the wolf will be most likely to go back to the sybil's cave."

"Try there first," said Monday.

"Find my boy, Monday, and you will not only make me more than ever your debtor, but you will save my poor wife's life, which is wrapped up in that of the child."

"No fear, sar; Monday do his best."

Jack and Bigamini walked together to the police office, where they saw the chief, who at once made preparations to capture the brigand.

Everyone regarded Monday with looks of surprise.

Spies, in all ages and every country, are the most trusted people.

Monday, indeed, had been a long-sought-for spy in the house of his master, and he was now a free man.

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"I am a captured monarch, vanquished in war by the treachery of my army. Pity me, peerless being."

Hilda looked astonished.

"Mr. Mole, do you not know me?" she asked.

"Know you, mistress of my soul and enslaver of my heart? Will thy devoted lover ever forget the blissful past?"

"What does this mean, Monday?" asked Hilda.

"Mole go mad, mum; he croak his elbow too much."

"Has he been drinking?"

"Like um fish, mum; for three days up, eat nothing, and drink, drink all day and night."

"What a pity! Does Mr. Harkaway know this?"

"Yes, mum; he told me to look after him."

"Do so at once. It is dreadful to see a man like this," said Hilda.

"March!" said Monday; "um got to go."

"Farewell, mistress of my soul," said Mr. Mole; "the dark days of my captivity will be lightened by the reflection of thy glowing beauty. Alexander of Macedonia is mine."

He seized her hand, kissed it, and falling his arms with dignity, added, "Lead on, lass, groom. I am thy captive."

"Poor old Mole, um very bad," muttered Monday, as he led him to a room, in which he placed him with a supply of bread and a good large pitcher of water.

When he had secured him, and placed it out of his reach to do any mischief, he spoke to his wife Ada, and told her he was going in search of the child.

She wished him success, he started once more for the open country, in which he had already rendered so much service to his master.

He had a difficult task before him.

It was impossible to say if the child was alive or dead. The wolf might have killed and eaten him, while on the other hand it was probable that he had taken him to some mountain cave and watched over him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LARBONI HUMBLER TO THE DUST.

When Bigamini left LARBONI in the lute, the thoughts of the brigand were very bitter.

His eyes were inflamed and burning fearfully.

But the more physical pain was nothing compared to that which he said was in his mind.

He had lost all.

His mother was dead, his wife was killed by his side, his band dispersed and himself isolated, while his enemies had triumphed.

He cursed Jack Harkaway in his heart, for it was the plucky Englishman who had brought him to his present state.

Curses, however, are not of much use to any who use them.

Bigamini had insulted him.

This was an additional pang to the proud brigand, who could not bear to be dependent upon a miserable spy whose life he had hung upon his finger.

"It's hard to bear, very hard," he muttered.

All his senses were coming home to him now, and the iron entered into his soul.

The sound of footsteps fell upon his ear.

"Harkaway, is that you?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "I don't get a shilling for love or money until tomorrow, and you'll have to wait."

"Well," repeated the brigand, "you are not able to tell that way, is it?"

"Why shouldn't I?" answered Harkaway; "you're played out now. The game's up. I for one am sick of it."

"Will you leave me?"

"Yes; I've had enough of this life, and I've got some money in my belt. Now you must have your go."

"I don't know, exactly," said the brigand.

"Give it to me," exclaimed Harkaway. "I

"We'll find one for your majesty," said Jack.

Bigamini began to laugh.

Mr. Mole instantly fell on his knees.

"Rabiant queen," he said, in a low voice,

can't be of much use to you now. Hand it over."

"Now, if I am to drag on a miserable existence as a blind man, I shall have to beg if I have no money."

"Beg away," replied Hunston unfeelingly. "Fork out the tin."

"I never thought I should come to this; you were my trusted lieutenant."

"You should have managed things better. I'm not a fool. Can't I see when it's time to throw up the sponge? Give me what money you have about you, and I'll step it at once."

"I am helpless," replied Barboni, with a deep sigh. "Take it; undo my belt, and you will have a fortune."

Hunston advanced to the fallen brigand, and took off his belt, which he opened, and looked joyfully over its contents.

The amount of notes, gold and jewels surpassed his most sanguine expectations.

"This is plummy," he said. "Good bye, old son; I wish you luck."

"Do you leave me to my fate?" asked Barboni.

"What's the use of stopping?"

"Is there no friendship between us?"

"Not a ha'porth; you were always a tyrant when you were well up, and I'm not sorry to get away, I can tell you."

Barboni sighed again.

He heard the chink of the gold and the rustle of the notes as Hunston placed his belt, in addition to his own, round his waist, then his footsteps died away, and his lieutenant was gone.

"Alone, alone," moaned the wretched man. "Blind, penniless, insulted, deserted, what a sad future have I before me."

He was right.

Toro would have been his friend if he had been the man he once was, but blind, he was good for nothing as a brigand.

He did not know what to do, and paced the hut up and down, cautiously extending his hands to feel his way as he walked.

After a time he heard footsteps again.

This sound was accompanied by the click of rifles and the measured tread of men.

He listened attentively.

"Toro and his band," he said to himself.

What would he not have given to be able to see?

All at once the noise ceased, and only the tread of one man was audible.

"Is that you, Toro?" he asked.

"No, signor. It is Bigamini, your prince of spies, as you used once to call me."

"Come in, good Bigamini," answered Barboni. "I am lonely, and want company. I forgive you for insulting me. Come, and let us be friends."

"Has Hunston been back with the doctor?"

"He came without him, and, having robbed me, went away forever."

"One bird flown," said Bigamini. "Never mind, one good catch in the net is better than none at all. You're a big fish."

This speech roused the brigand's suspicions.

"You would not betray me?" he said, in a tremulous voice.

"Think of the future we have in store for us if I get back my sight."

"Don't talk rubbish," replied Bigamini; "you're a settled member."

"No, no. Santo Dio! I shall be greater than ever soon. I have got some treasure buried. Hunston did not take all. You shall be my trusted favorite. I will make you rich and great. Think of that. Only be faithful to me now."

"Hold your row," was Bigamini's answer.

Going to the door, he put his fingers in his mouth, and gave a shrill whistle.

The next moment Jack Harkaway entered the hut, which was entirely surrounded by soldiers in a double row.

A police officer followed Jack, holding a pair of handcuffs.

"Is that the man, signor?" asked the officer.

"Yes. I will swear to him, answered Jack. It is Barboni."

At these words the brigand chief trembled more violently than before.

"In the king's name, I arrest you for brigandage, robbery, and murder," continued the officer.

"I submit," said Barboni, who, by a desperate effort, tried to be calm.

He had recognized Jack's voice, and did not wish to exhibit any weakness in his presence.

The click of the manacles was next heard, as they were fastened on his wrists.

"Did Bigamini betray me?" asked Barboni.

"Yes; I don't mind telling you that, if it's any comfort to you."

"My dying curse upon the hound! my bitter curse upon him!" said the brigand, in a tone of deep feeling.

Barboni was placed in a cart, round which the soldiers formed, making an escort, from which rescue was impossible.

But who was there to attempt to help the fallen brigand.

No one.

All had perished or deserted him, and as he was driven slowly to Naples to be placed in a strong prison, his proud heart was bowed down and humbled to the dust.

His life was drawing to a close, and the scaffold, with its hideous accessories, loomed up terribly before him.

Jack Harkaway had, through Bigamini's treachery, triumphed over him at last.

The Englishmen had kept their solemn oath, though it had cost them dear.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TRAITOR'S REWARD.

WHEN the traitor had accomplished his base purpose, and seen Barboni led captive by the soldiers, he strutted about as proud as a bantam cock.

His reward was a large one.

Besides this, he received a free pardon; the police would not touch him, and he could walk about Naples with as little fear of arrest as the most respectable citizen of the city.

All he had to do now was to go and claim the reward.

Then he could set sail in one of the Marseilles steamers, reach France, travel first-class like a gentleman to Paris, and enjoy himself in that gay capital with his ill-gotten gains.

He looked round the hut, and thought that a drink of wine wouldn't do him any harm.

An old-fashioned amphora, or jar of clay, stood in the corner, and he poured some sparkling wine into a horn.

It used to be Barboni's favorite, and the brigand chief was not a bad judge of anything that related to eating and drinking.

"Old Barboni won't have much more of this sort of tippie," said the spy with a sardonic grin. "He's played out, and it's my turn now. Won't I be a swell in Paris? My eye! Suppose I call myself a prince."

His eyes twinkled at the idea.

"Prince Bigamini, there's a rattling title; got estates in Italy; plenty of cash to spend. I shall be the rage."

A slight noise in the rear roused his attention from the vain-glorious contemplation in which he was plunged.

"Oh! crumbs," he cried, "what's up?"

He took a hasty glance at the door, and saw several dark figures approaching.

"Strike me comical!" he said, "it's Toro. Oh! here's a go. I've put my foot in it now."

He instantly fell down in a corner, and pretended to be insensible, while almost immediately afterwards the brigands entered.

"Where is Barboni?" asked Toro. "Santissima Virgine!" he added, crossing himself, "something has happened."

"Here is his man," answered a brigand, pointing to Bigamini.

"Wake him up."

Bigamini was pushed rather roughly, and showed no signs of life.

A kick or two caused him to raise himself on his elbow, and look wildly about him.

"Where am I?" he asked, with an air of forgetfulness and confusion.

"In the hut," replied Toro.

"Where?"

"Are you hurt?"

"I don't know what you call hurt," replied Bigamini, recovering from his pretended insensibility, "but a soldier gave me an ugly blow during the fight, and I crawled in here."

"What fight?"

"The soldiers surprised Barboni. They were led on by the Englishman, Jack Harkaway, and I fought like a lion. He was no good, because he was blind, and what could I do against a host of them?"

"Is Barboni captured?" asked Toro, arching his bull-like neck, as his nostrils dilated.

"I suppose so, if he isn't here."

"Diavolo!"

"Believe me, Signor Toro, I fought like a devil, and how I was not captured I don't know."

Toro was greatly excited.

"How long ago was this?" he asked.

"I cannot tell exactly, but not long, I expect," replied Bigamini.

"The moon is up. It is some distance to Naples; they will travel slowly, and perhaps bivouac by the way," said Toro, hurriedly.

"What do you say, my lads, shall we make a dash for Barboni?"

"Si, si!" cried the brigands, in chorus.

"He was always a valiant gentleman and a good robber," cried Toro.

"He was, he was!"

"Shoulder your muskets, then. We will show those rascally Bersaglieri what Toro and his men can do. Fall in, Bigamini."

"You must excuse me, Signor Toro," answered Bigamini; "I am that bad I don't think I could walk a mile to save my life."

"Where is your wound?"

"On my—my head, Signor Toro."

"Come here; let's look at it."

The spy trembled.

He affected to sink back in a faint, and groaned terribly.

"The poor devil is no good to us," said Toro, compassionately. "He appears to have fought well for his master; let him be where he is; we will see to him on our return. Forward, my men, to rescue Barboni."

The brigands stepped forward with alacrity, and, to the great delight of the spy, left him to himself, without seeking any further for the imaginary wound, which they would not have found if they had hunted for a month.

When they were gone Bigamini got up.

"That was a close shave," he said. "Full clear out of this."

Accordingly he quitted the hut, and was proceeding to Naples when he thought of his wife.

"There are so many slips between cup and lip in this wretched life," he murmured, "that I'll go and make sure she has broken her neck."

He struck across the mountain's side, and sought the spot where he had left the unfortunate Mrs. Smiffins hanging to a branch of a tree which stood on the brow of a chasm.

The tree was there, but no Mrs. Smiffins.

All that remained of her was a tattered remnant of her dress.

"She's gone to glory," said Bigamini, with a grin. "Now I'm all right."

He concluded that she had fallen down and was killed, so without waiting for any further investigation, he walked as quickly as he could to Naples.

But he took the most unfrequented road, to avoid meeting Toro and his men.

When he reached the police station it was growing late.

It was one of his maxims that one ought to strike the iron while it was hot.

If he went to sleep over the matter, something might happen during the night which would cheat him out of his reward.

He hungered after the gold he had earned by basely betraying his master.

The chief of the police had left word that the five thousand ducats were to be given him

on demand, directly news of the capture of Barboni was brought to them.

Jack Harkaway had rendered him that friendly service by galloping on in front of the soldiers.

It was known all over Naples that Barboni was captured.

Walking into the office, he said:

"I am Bigamini, and I want the reward, if you please."

"Ah, yes, you are the spy," replied the officer in command, with a plainly perceptible sneer. "I recognize you."

"If you look at me in that way you will be sure to know me when you meet me again," answered Bigamini, impudently.

"Don't be impertinent," said the officer, with a severe look.

"No, signor," said Bigamini, trembling for his money.

"How will you have it?"

"Gold, all gold, in bags," replied Bigamini, eagerly.

The officer banded him five bags, each containing the value of a thousand ducats.

"Take it and begone," he said.

Bigamini had no wish to stay; the atmosphere of a police station never agreed with him.

It made him sick, so he stuffed the bags into his pockets, and stepped out of the place gayly.

But retribution was in store for him.

Scarcely had he reached the door when a bulky form stopped his egress, and brandished a huge umbrella over his head.

"You little villain, I've got you again, have I?" exclaimed the figure, savagely. "They told me you had gained the reward, and I knew I should find you sooner or later coming after the money, so I determined to wait for you if I stood in the street all night."

"Sarah-Ann!" gasped the astonished tailor.

"Yes, sir; your lawful wife."

"Oh, sciscors!" exclaimed Bigamini.

"You thought me dead; but I didn't hang there long. Some kind people who had come to see the burning mountain came by, and hearing my screams, helped me up. Oh, you beast—you wretch!"

She beat him with her umbrella, and seizing his hair, pulled it violently.

"I say, Sarah Ann, turn it up. It hurts. You're pulling out handfuls," said Bigamini, frightened out of his life, and suffering agony.

"Serve you right too, you deceitfullest of all deceitful, slimy, crawling vipers!" replied his wife.

"I ain't slimy."

"Yes, you are! Oh, drat you, I'll serve you out! I'll warm you! You'll get it hot this time, make no error?" said Mrs. Smiffins, with a handful of hair in each hand.

"Let go, will you?" cried Bigamini angrily.

"I shan't!" was the reply.

The little man struggled into the street amid the laughter of the police officers, who thoroughly enjoyed the scene.

His wife continued to attack him in the same desperate manner, and he defended himself as best he could.

His object seemed to be to get her away from the officers into some quiet corner.

This he at length accomplished.

They turned a corner, and with a savage blow, he said:

"Don't maul me about so, or you'll be sorry for it."

"Shall I?" she said, beating him with the umbrella.

"You fool," he said, "why don't you be quiet?"

"Because I'm your wife, and you can't alter

it. You've committed bigamy, and I mean to transport you."

"Let go. I shan't ask you again," he said, clenching his teeth.

"Never, I'll have my revenge," replied Mrs. Smiffins.

"So will I, once and forever," said Bigamini.

He drew his knife, raised his arm, and plunged it into her body.

She fell instantly, and he ran away, leaving her bathed in blood, to be found by the police when they came round.

"I am murdered. Oh, that I should have come to this," she moaned.

Bigamini was too hardened now to care about committing a crime; his only anxiety was to get clear off.

This he succeeded in doing, and soon reached the extremity of the city, making for the country, where he knew he could obtain shelter. Naples was closed to him again after this.

He would be accused of his wife's murder, and his free pardon for brigandage would not avail him in the least.

His treachery to Barboni had rendered it impossible that he could again join the brigands, and it was difficult for him to guess how he could get away to France.

He took the old road which led to the Volturno, intending to sleep that night in the witch's cave.

His old fright in the cave was forgotten, and he did not care if he saw the ghost of the murdered witch, as he was so tired that he could have slept in a grave-yard.

[To be continued in WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY, No. 1234, entitled "Jack Harkaway and the Italians; or, The Brigand's Doom."]]

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